

AUGUSTINE A. NURSE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
AFRO-AMERICANS IN SAN FRANCISCO
PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II

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Augustine A. Nurse.
Augustine Nurse

Date March 9, 1979



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The Friends of the San Francisco Public Library,
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and Cultural Society

Project Coordinator: Lynn Bonfield

INTERVIEW WITH MRS. AUGUSTINE NURSE

SEPTEMBER 2, 1978

At the Osborne Mortuary, 2200 Sutter Street,
San Francisco, CA

Interviewer: Jesse J. Warr, III

Transcriber: Mary A. Wells

JW: Let's start with your birthdate and place.

AN: I was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, October 14, 1900.

JW: Were you born at home?

AN: Yes. Had a physician.

JW: You did. Was that because there were some difficulties with the birth, or was that usual?

AN: No. It was just that I was the first grandchild in the family. My father was an Eastern man. He was accustomed to people having a doctor when they had the babies. So he had a doctor to attend. There was no Colored doctors in the town at that time. It was a White physician. His name was Wilson...was the doctor that attended at the time.

JW: What was your full maiden name?

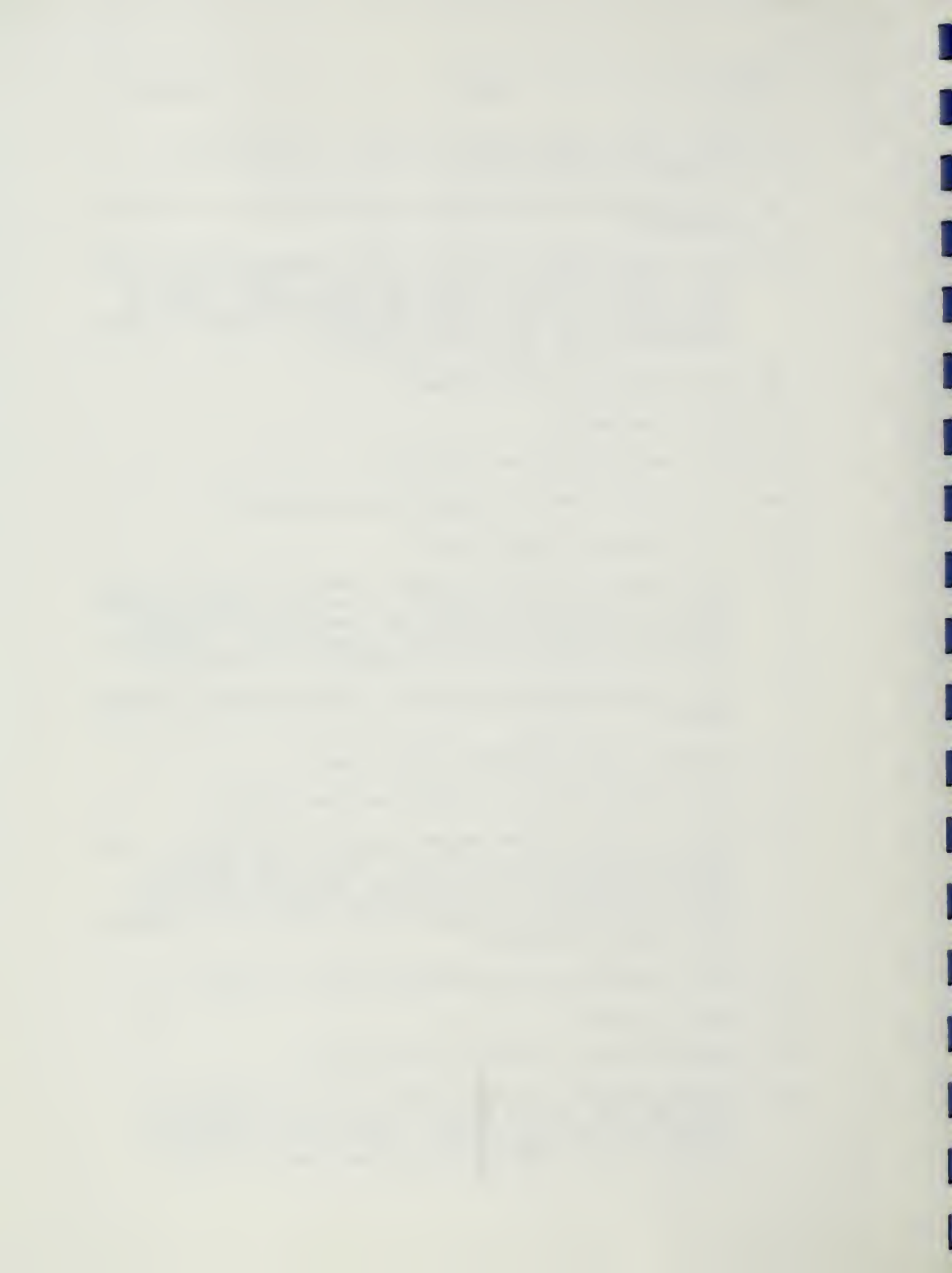
AN: Augustine Arnise Williams.

JW: Were they pleased to have a little girl?

AN: Oh, thrilled. It was my grand...maternal grandparents' side, that they raise their first grandchild. When I was a year old, I went to live with my grandparents (on my maternal grandparents' side) and they raised me. And I was raised just like a little doll, until I was twelve years old. Then I learned I had to do work and things.

JW: Where was their house? In the city of Alexandria?

- AN: Yes. It was a small town, see. It was just starting to grow up then.
- JW: So did you have chickens and other animals and things around?.
- AN: No, there wasn't that part. My grandparents had that. See, when I went to my grandparents, then I went to the country to live. See, my grandparents lived in the country and they had a farm and all that. We had chickens on the yard all the time.
- JW: Were they prosperous farmers?
- AN: Yes, they were.
- JW: They owned their own property?
- AN: No, they leased the property that they had.
- JW: From Whites or from Blacks?
- AN: From Whites. We had a pecan orchard and used to ship pecans all over the country. Then just small acreage for...to raise for the cattle, you know, for feed... horses and things like that. Then he had a stallion horse, you know, that he studded out all the time.
- JW: What other crops did he raise? What was their primary crop?
- AN: Cotton, corn, potatoes, sugar cane.
- JW: Who hacked that cane and picked that cotton?
- AN: Well, he just raised enough cane for the family. See, normally people who went into sugar cane business, they would raise large amounts. But just family... private families would raise just enough, you know, for to make the sugar and syrup for the winter season, from season to season.
- JW: But I suppose they raised the cotton for cash.
- AN: Yes. To sell.
- JW: Who took care of that? Who raised it?
- AN: My grandfather and my...they...on my grandmother's side she had three nephews. Her oldest brother had passed and she had his son. And then she had her sister's son. [There] always was some boy coming



along that my grandfather would pick up and keep. And they would stay until harvest time and he would pay them, and they would travel on. But the other two would stay with us all the time.

JW: Why didn't they buy the property out right?

AN: Well, I would say that it wasn't seemingly a thing that Colored people were doing at that time. If... For example we had a family that lived about five miles from us. They had their own land. But it was... he got it...he inherited it, you know, from his foster parents...from his parents. But occasionally they [i.e. usually colored people] didn't. Most times they would just, you know, rent or lease so much. Sometimes they put...you know, you remember after slavery, it started on...

JW: Share.

AN: Share, see. But this wasn't shares. They would raise so much and they charged them so much for the land, you know, that they used. And what you raised on it was your own.

JW: How much...I'm not familiar with this part of Louisiana. Is this a mosquito infested area?

AN: Not too badly. Because we lived in the center, about the mid-part of Louisiana...what they call the northern part of it.

JW: And most of the people around there were Protestants?

AN: And Catholics.

JW: Was your family considered Creole?

AN: My grand...step-grandfather was Creole. But we wasn't considered Creole. So, of course, we had an association with them because of him, you know, being a Creole. See, my paternal grandfather had passed when my mother... and he left seven children. My next grandfather, he came from the southern part of Louisiana where the Creoles and all lived down in there. He married my grandmother and raised all her children.

JW: Well, it's been said that the Creole and non-Creole Coloreds did not associate very much. Was this true in your area?

1. The first part of the problem is to find the area of the rectangle. The length is 12 cm and the width is 8 cm. The area is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Area} = \text{length} \times \text{width} = 12 \text{ cm} \times 8 \text{ cm} = 96 \text{ cm}^2$$

2. The second part of the problem is to find the perimeter of the rectangle. The length is 12 cm and the width is 8 cm. The perimeter is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Perimeter} = 2 \times (\text{length} + \text{width}) = 2 \times (12 \text{ cm} + 8 \text{ cm}) = 40 \text{ cm}$$

3. The third part of the problem is to find the area of the square. The side length is 10 cm. The area is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Area} = \text{side length} \times \text{side length} = 10 \text{ cm} \times 10 \text{ cm} = 100 \text{ cm}^2$$

4. The fourth part of the problem is to find the perimeter of the square. The side length is 10 cm. The perimeter is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Perimeter} = 4 \times \text{side length} = 4 \times 10 \text{ cm} = 40 \text{ cm}$$

5. The fifth part of the problem is to find the area of the circle. The radius is 5 cm. The area is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Area} = \pi \times \text{radius}^2 = \pi \times 5^2 = 25\pi \text{ cm}^2$$

AN: I wouldn't say it that way. They was...The Creoles that they speak of that didn't associate with others, that was the mullato Creoles, see, in Louisiana. They lived on what was known as Cane River...was the area and the parish that they lived in...practically was all those fair Creoles, see, lived there. But, at the same time, if one was Creole and he was black as the ace of spades, he was accepted...even with them. That's the way that was. (Chuckle).

JW: We haven't described yet the house that you grew up in.

AN: It was^a house with five rooms. It had a large kitchen and we'd say...There was a dining room table and everything would sit right in that one big room. Then there was three bedrooms. We had a porch on the front and a porch on the back. And the house, you know, set up high off the ground. You could go under the house and play if you wanted to, and things like that. And the windows...

JW: Weren't there snakes and things under there?

AN: No, it wasn't. It was always clean under there (Chuckle). The windows came down, you know, right to the floor. And you could open a window and step right out and jump on the ground.

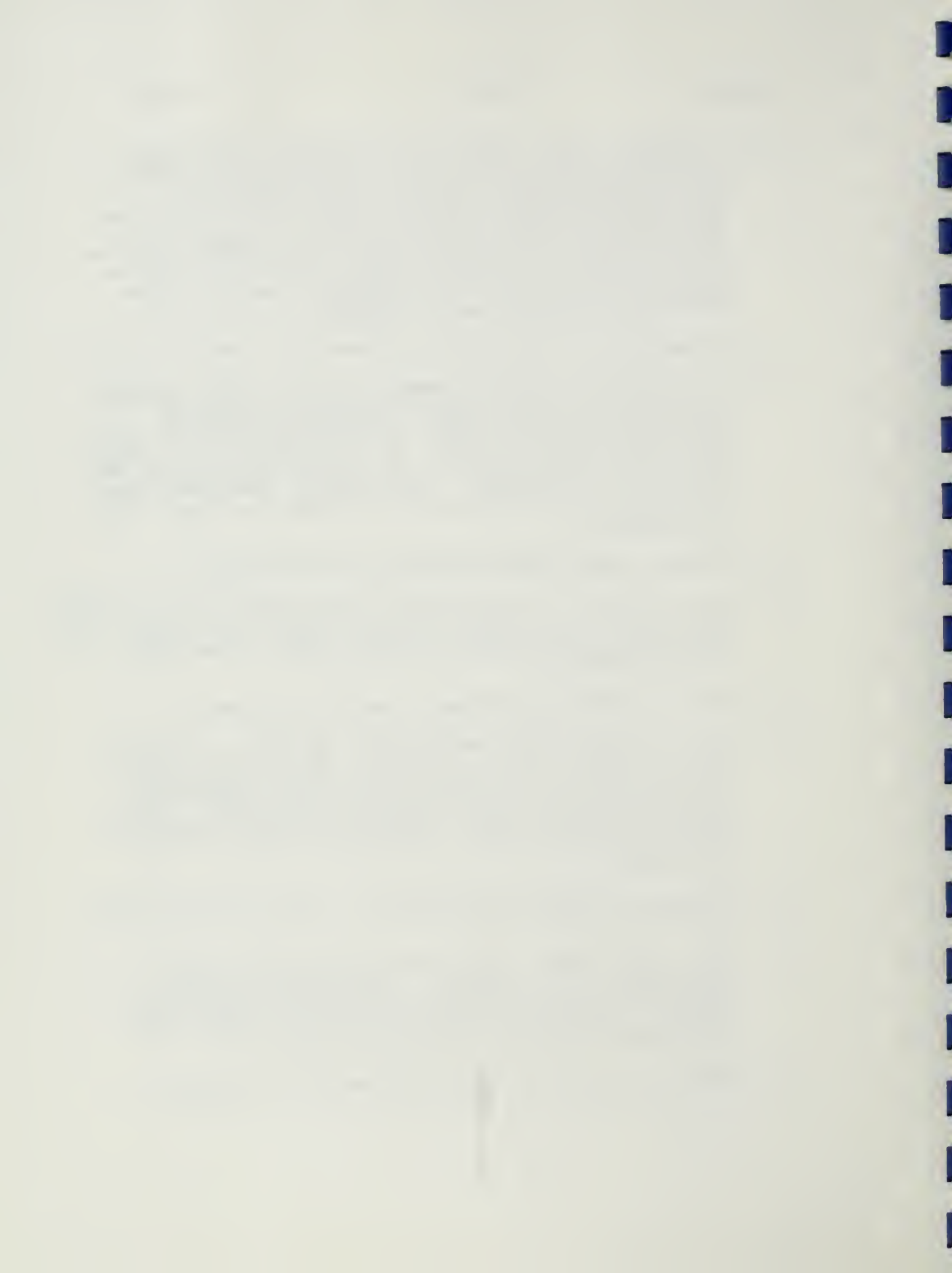
JW: Oh. Who were your friends when you were small?

AN: Well, I didn't...By each family, you know, we'd say... wasn't "plantations", didn't call them "plantations"... "acreage"; they [each family] had separate [isolated plots of land]. I had just about two friends...two close friends that we'd...they'd come and...you know, girls my age would come and visit me and I'd go and visit them.

JW: Did you have any association as a child with the White families around?

AN: Yes. The closest family to us was White. See, my grandmother was a midwife. She served everybody, White and Colored. And all the children that she delivered...the White children called her "Mammo" and the Colored children called her "Grandma."

JW: Were you allowed to play with the White children?



AN: Yes.

JW: At what point did that stop? Or did it?

AN: It never did stop. The family...see, they were a joining family...Where we lived, it was White on either side...families. Some were in farming and the others were...they had a little cottonseed gin mill there as well where they--you know, after the cotton is picked and everything, and they take the seed--you know about that? [Yes]-and they'd grind it up into meal, and that was shipped out. And that...where we lived, too, was close to Red River...because our land bordered on Red River...the end of it was on Red River. That was the place...and, unfortunately...we said it was coincident... the family that was running this mill and all, their name was Williams too. See, my grandparents' name was Harris...their surname.

JW: Did you have any siblings, brothers and sisters?

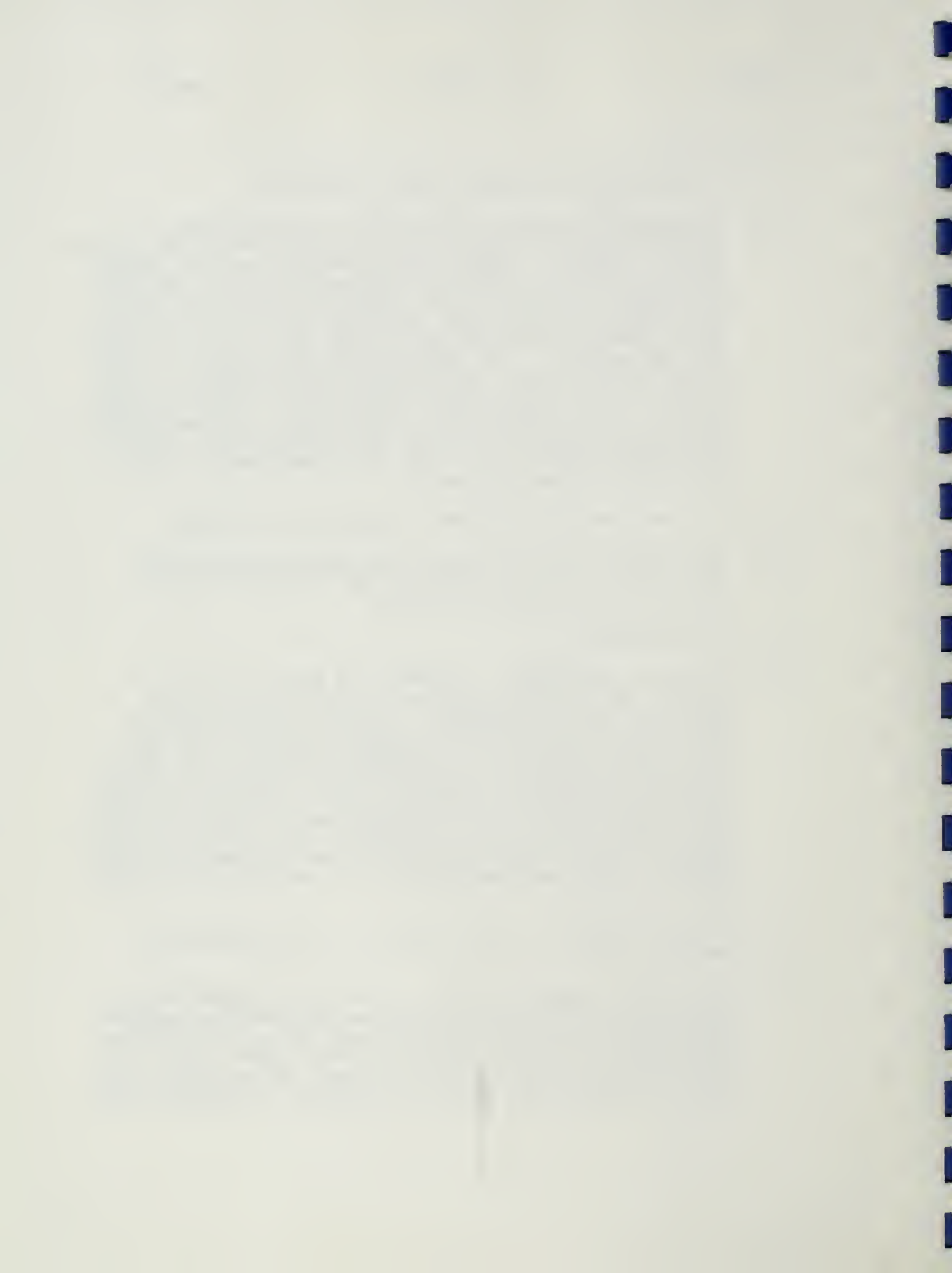
AN: Yes, I had two. My father was married three times. My mother was his last wife. And he lived in New York, as the story he tells us.

JW: His name was?

AN: Thomas D. Williams. We never did know what the 'D' meant. He never did tell us. His first wife was White; he had two children. Then he was running on what they call a "through" freight [train] from New York to New Orleans..., brakesman on the road. Then his second family was in Maryland. Their mother was Spanish and had two children by that family. And when his extension came...this train come all the way South, they they would...see, Alexandria was a junction town... and they would stay overnight. That was how he met my mother. They were married and it was two children to that marriage.

JW: Was she aware of these other two families when she married him?

AN: No, it was revealed later. Because the first family, the boy came South until he found him because he knew what train...you know, what he was doing. So he came and visited the family and went from there. Then the second family, their mother...First, he separated, he say, from the first wife. The second, the mother died,



- AN: the Spanish one. And my brother, his aunt raised him, my second brother. My sister was small. They put her in a convent; she grew up in a convent there [in] Maryland, Baltimore.
- JW: Now you had one brother that lived with you, though?
- AN: And one...See, this last marriage, it was two children. I was the oldest and my brother was the youngest.
- JW: How much younger than you was he?
- AN: Almost two years.
- JW: And what was his name?
- AN: Thomas D. Williams.
- JW: Oh.
- AN: No, Thomas Emmanuel Williams, because he took on my grandfather's name as a second name. ✓ Were you close to your brother? JW:
- AN: Yes. Not...well, close to a certain point. Because, see, my parents raised him, and I was raised by my grandparents. And then when they moved away...around about fifteen or twenty miles, which was a long distance away...to another small town, well, they moved the junction town from where we were to another place. And so in summer he would come and spend vacation with us.
- JW: Did your parents have...Did you feel that your parents had favorites; that one or the other of them favored one or the other of you?
- AN: My father, I guess, liked girls. When I'd go visit, you know, he would always...he would pamper me, see. Because when I'd go visit them, it was just like somebody coming for a visit, because my...I would...particularly after I started school, I could only go and visit them when school was out, and things like that. And...
- JW: Visit them where? In Maryland or in New York?
- AN: No. In Alexandria. See, they lived in the town and we lived in the country, which was fourteen miles distance.

JW: What did your brother eventually do?

AN: My brother has deceased in '74. But he was adventurous. He was in the Tenth Cavalry and stationed near Mexico in Nogales[Arizona]. That was the first adventure. He ran away when he was about fifteen, put his age up and went into that [Cavalry], and...

JW: Was this an all-Black unit?

AN: Yes. Tenth Cavalry Troop C. Then when he...

JW: Why did he run away from home?

AN: Well, he was with my parents, see. My father being a railroad man...I guess he [brother] had the same adventurous spirit, like my father. He must have. (Chuckle) That's the only way I could say it and describe it to you. Then after he came out the Service...Hollywood, you know, had just started then. He was very handsome. So he decided that he could get into pictures and make, you know, work with pictures. So then he went out to the studios, and when they didn't want him for nothing but to be Zulus, or Hulus, he became discouraged. Then he got on the U.S. Transport boats and went all around the world. He stayed on that about five years...and all around the world and everything...learned some of the languages and customs of all different people and everything. Then in 1927 we were living together...

JW: Here in San Francisco?

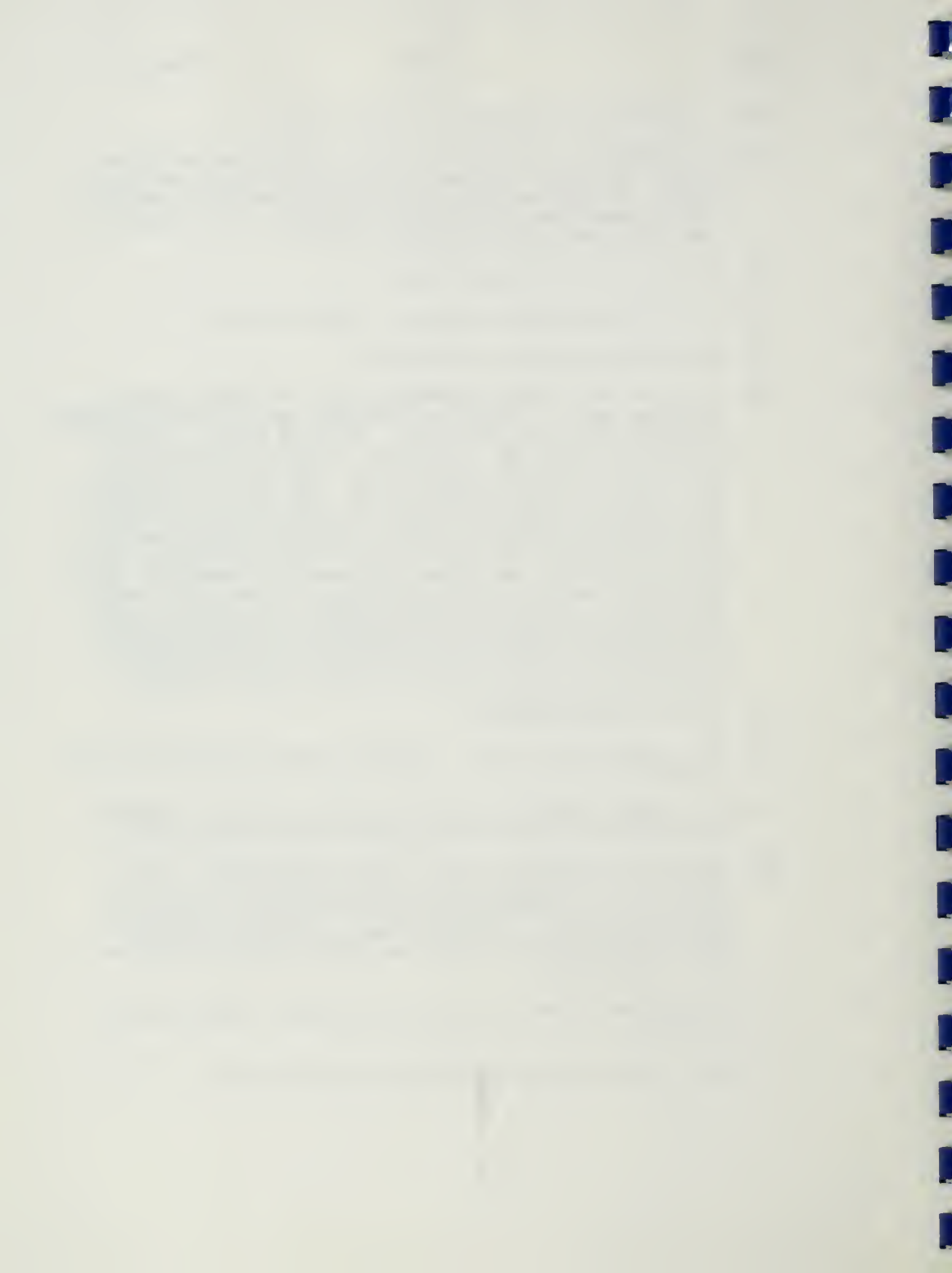
AN: Yes. And so he...See, I moved to San Francisco to live in 1920.

JW: As a small child, was there anything that you remember your parents always telling you to do or not to do?

AN: Well, my grandmother was a very exacting lady. She would tell you once what you supposed to do and once what you're not supposed to do. She wasn't one that would beat you or anything, but...all she would do [was to] remind you. She was just about four feet and five inches tall.

JW: So you were almost as tall as she was, I guess, after a while.

AN: Yes, I was taller than her in a short time.



JW: Were there people that she told you not to hang around [with] or places you weren't allowed to go?

AN: Well, they didn't...in that period they didn't have to tell you that. You knew the people that you grew up with and associated with, and that was it. And the other thing that...One peculiarity I look back on and think now is [that] all the girls could come and spend time with us, spend the weekend or anything like that, and stay. But they [my parents] were very... didn't want me to... [There was] just one family that I could go and do that with.

JW: What family was that?

AN: Fairfax family.

JW: Were they Black?

AN: Yes.

JW: Did she feel that the town was a threat to you in any way...going into town?

AN: No, we never had that feeling at all. See, I went to school. I had to walk five miles to go to public school. I had to go right through the little town to the other side where the school was.

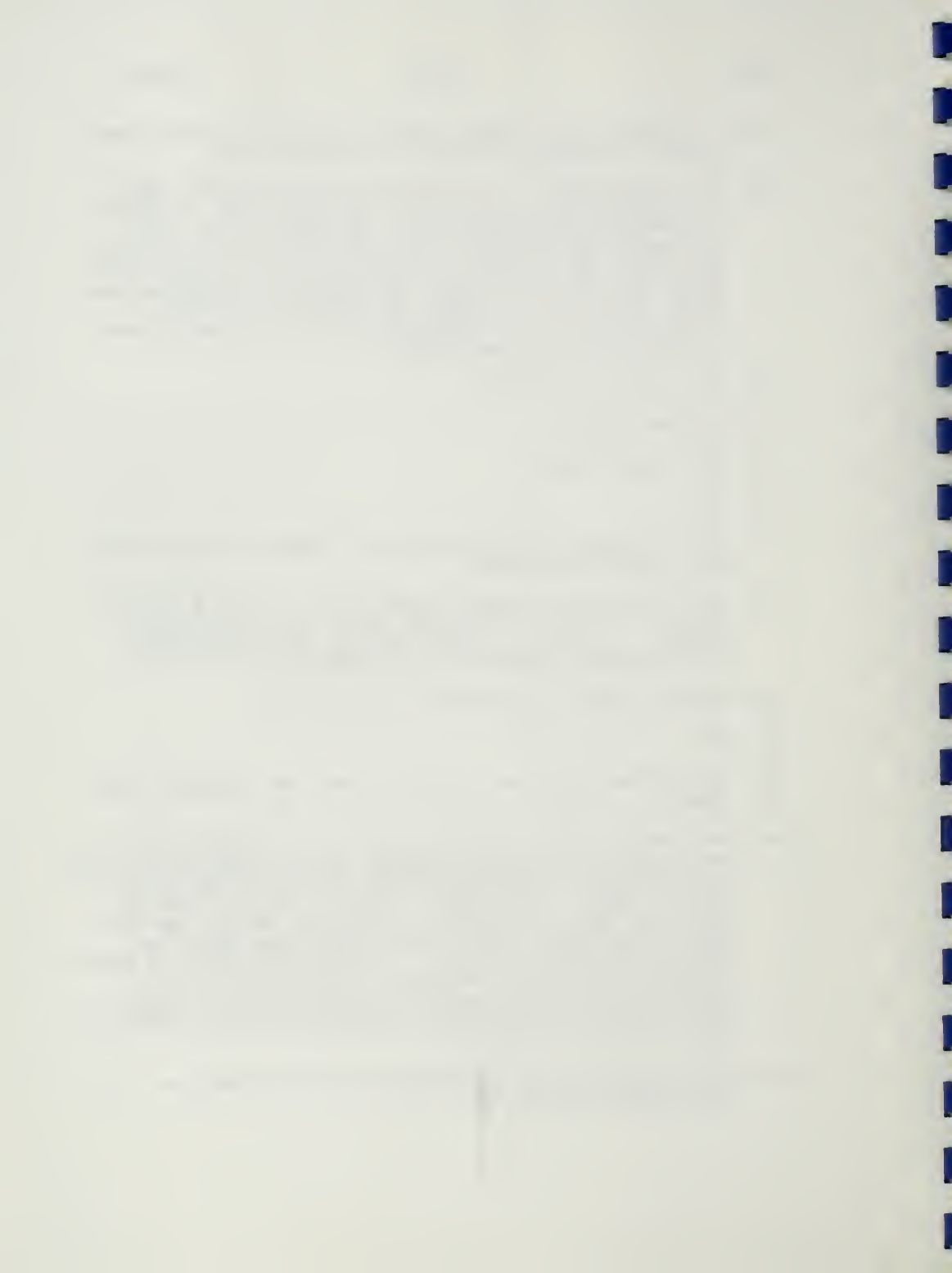
JW: These schools, of course, were Jim Crow?

AN: Yes.

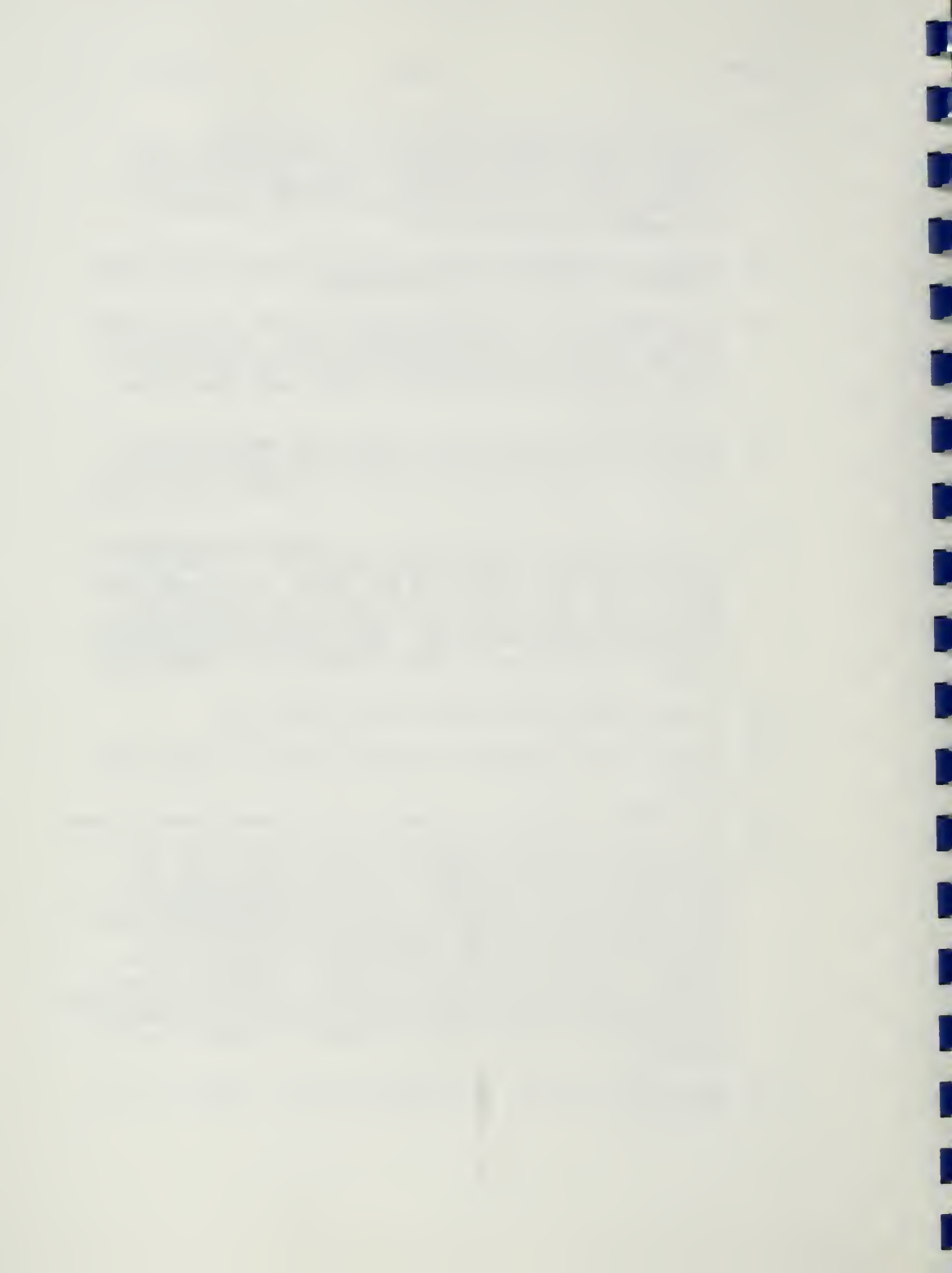
JW: What about White men? Did she ever say anything about them?

AN: No, because, see, having grown up as neighbors with the White families...Their youngest son was around about the ...he was about two years older than me. And he was a whiz in math. I was dull. So he'd help me with my math all the time. And we lived just about...say from here to Divisadero Park...See, they were about two homes from where we lived. So he would...I'd get home--my house was before you got to his house--and so he would...after I had reached the fractions and things like that, he would help and show me how to do that and all. But that was all.

JW: You said she [your grandmother] didn't spank you. Did your mother spank you?



- AN: No. All she had to [do was to] talk to you and you knew what...you know. I would beg so that they...If my grandfather was home, there wasn't a chance [that I'd be spanked]. Because I would run to him and he wouldn't let her whip me. (Chuckle) He wouldn't let her do it.
- JW: Wasn't it somewhat unusual? Didn't most children get spanked or whipped in those days?
- AN: Yes, they did. I think that it was the way they were being raised...by their parents, see. If they were strict with them and didn't relent...as the saying goes, "meant what they said", then they didn't have no problems.
- JW: What kinds of...you didn't have any...what kinds of things did you have to do around the house or...On a farm, I guess there are a lot of things a child can do.
- AN: Well, I didn't do anything on the farm or anything in the house until I was twelve years old. I was the first grandchild and I had two aunts. They were home and so they took care of the house and did all the work there. Then when the last aunt got married, I was about eight years old. Then slowly my grandmother started teaching me to wash dishes and do things like that.
- JW: So what did you do with all this free time?
- AN: Play. Had a dollhouse and played, and do things like that.
- JW: Was there a library available? Were there books around?
- AN: We always had books around. At that time they had a book, oh, about that [three inches] thick, see, it was almost like an Atlas. And it had everything in it. Any questions or anything you wanted to find out about, you could just turn to that and look and find out. And my step grandfather, where he...he didn't go to school. He couldn't read or write. But there wasn't nothing about math that you could tell him, a percentage or anything, when he went to sell or buy, or anything like that, he didn't know all about. He could understand it.
- JW: What about church? Were your parents...grandparents religious?



- AN: My grandmother was Baptist and my grandfather Catholic. So we wasn't living close to the Catholic church, so he didn't go to church. But my grandmother did. Grandmother had a beautiful voice. My two aunts [did too]. They used to sing as a trio in the church and go places and sing for the people...different organizations, you know, churches and around like that.
- JW: Was this the kind of church where people would "shout" when they were happy?
- AN: Not too much. It wasn't emotional, not too emotional. Coming to the next point, what little emotion they would show, it would always kind of upset me. Not to be emotional. But I just didn't think it was necessary, you know. Why [was outward demonstration of emotion necessary?] Why? I didn't have that feeling, so I didn't know why. So, soon as I was old enough to make my own choice, then I went to the Methodist church. And my father was Catholic, and my youngest brother... my brother, he was the youngest, he was raised Catholic. Because at that time if a Catholic married a Protestant, one child was Catholic and the other one was Protestant and they [the parents] would decide on which was which.
- JW: How did the family celebrate its holidays, like birthdays? What did they do on your birthday?
- AN: On birthdays, you know, have a cake and the children in the neighborhood. And sometimes if your birthday was in the middle of the week, maybe school time, they'd wait until Saturday and have it on Saturdays and have all the school children around the neighborhood to come.
- JW: White and Colored?
- AN: Yes.
- JW: What about Christmas?
- AN: Oh, that was homecoming day. All the family wherever they lived--New York, Chicago, or wherever--everybody came home. My grandmother's home was the center of all the family coming home. Once in a while we'd have a little snow at Christmas-time and there...which was unusual to do [to have happen]. But when we did, then that would be. My grandmother would cook for two weeks getting ready for Christmas...all the cakes and things like that.

JW: Did she train you how to cook?

AN: No, because she enjoyed doing that herself, and she didn't like housework. She trained me to take care of the house and do all the housecleaning and do that. (Chuckle) She said, "You'll learn how to cook soon enough."

JW: Did you? How did you learn how to cook?

AN: When I had to. (Chuckle)

JW: When was that?

AN: After I married. And I didn't do too much of that. Because my first husband was a cook himself and he could do the cooking. (Chuckle) I'd set the table and be the second...you know, wash the dishes and things like that. When he was in...he was a railroad man too.

JW: Did you take trips to New Orleans or anywhere...Baton Rouge?

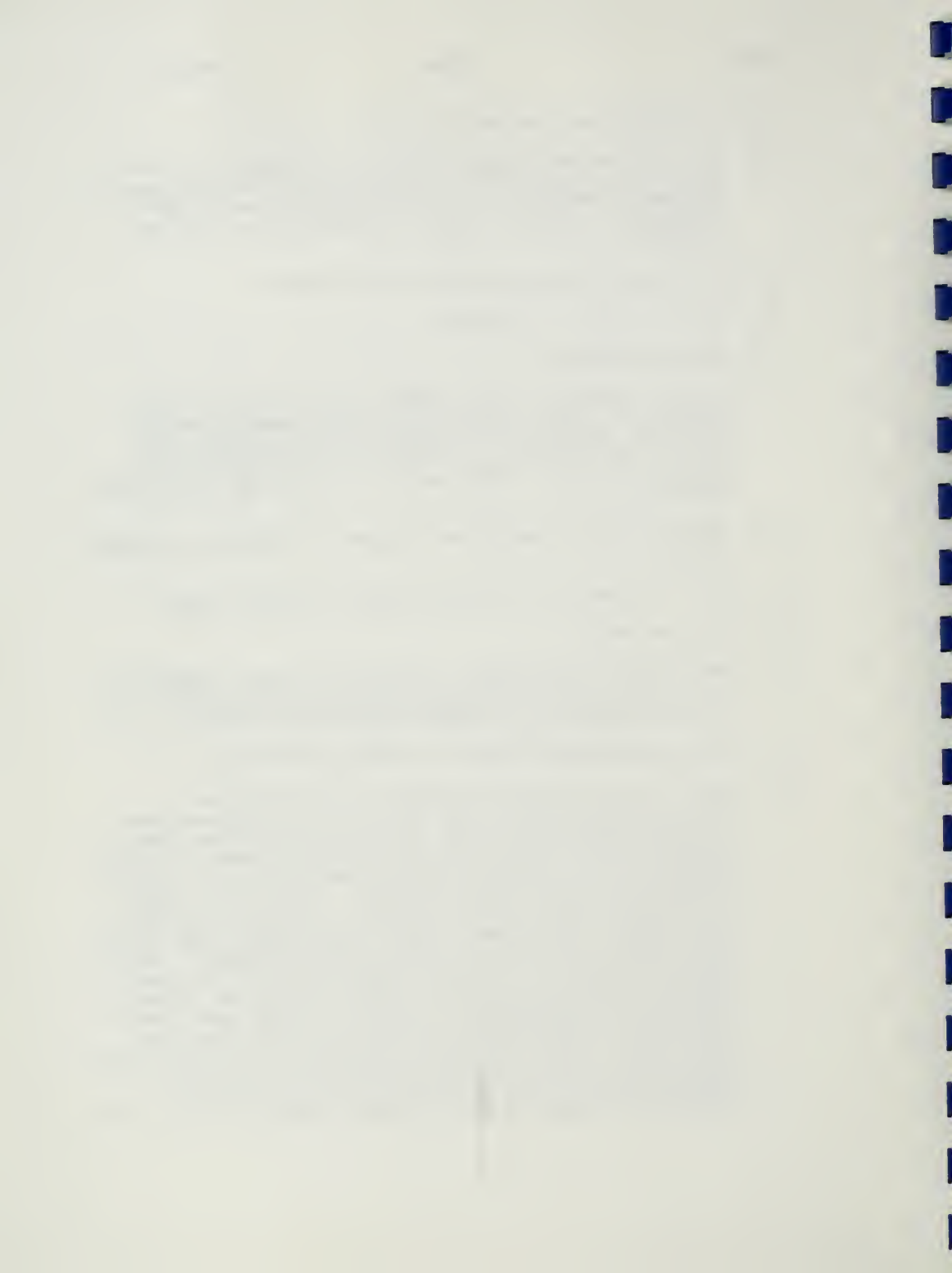
AN: Yes. We used to go to the Mardi Gras every year.

JW: How was that?

AN: Beautiful. Little kids, you know, sitting around on the sidewalk at St. Charles looking at the parade. My father would take us every year to Mardi Gras.

JW: Was there anywhere else the family would go?

AN: Well, no. The only other main big celebration... As you know, in the South so many of the states didn't let the Negroes know they were free until June 19th [1863]. In Louisiana June 19th we celebrated as Independence Day. And they would promote it. For example, it would be, say, in New Orleans. And the next time it would be in another place, say, about two hundred or a hundred miles away. They would gather just like a convention, see, from all the other "parishes". As you know, Louisiana is the only state that has "parishes". And they would meet there. And my father was a good promoter and knew how to do that. So when they would come there, he was always the chairman of that, and put it over. And so they...it would go for three days. They'd have booths along the main street and sell different, you know, food and fish and all that. And they'd have horse racing and bands playing on June 19th.



JW: Did the Whites feel uncomfortable with this celebration?

AN: Oh, no. They would help to promote it. Because that brought people in to the places. And sometimes, you know, those who would come from other parishes there would eventually perhaps move to that place...you know, like it so well they'd move there. No, they would always cooperate and contribute to it. It was right on the main street downtown, or wherever the main street was they would have it. They would have it close enough to the station so that the people coming on the trains wouldn't have too far to go. It would be just like a carnival, you know, booths and things like that. It was nothing for sale. Everything was free.

JW: And you had to stay, I guess, with families. Were there hotels for Blacks to stay?

AN: Well, most times those that...they come in on those "excursions" and they would stay on the train cars... stay in the coaches that was set aside for that... Come from different places. They would stay...you know, if they knew some of the families. They'd open homes to them and like that. But they would always come in on what they call "excursions" from the different parishes.

JW: Did people in your family...or were...do much discussion of slavery, I mean, outside of late night conversation? Or would somebody say, "I think you ought to know about this?"

AN: Yes. My great-grandmother came direct from Africa and she was a descendant of Cleopatra. She had hair down to her waistline, beautiful hair, beautiful features. And she lived to be a hundred and fourteen years old. I knew her.

JW: What was her name?

AN: Rose Chatman, C-h-a-t-m-a-n. That was her husband's name. She had twenty children, eighteen boys and two girls.

JW: Oh, my goodness!

AN: Survived them all except two.

JW: Did she ever talk about the trip across [the Atlantic]?



- AN: Oh, yes. Well, she said that she was not abused or anything like that when she came, when they brought them over. Said they didn't have no problems like so many of the people said they had. But they didn't... she didn't. And she wasn't raped or anything like that. Because she said she was fourteen years old and she knew, you know, where they brought them. And just like the story goes--I guess it was the truth--they had trinkets, you know, to try to bait them, you know, to come and all. But she said that's the way it was.
- JW: Does she remember any of her life in Africa?
- AN: Yes.
- JW: What kind of people was she from or where did they live, or whatever?
- AN: Now it isn't clear in my mind now because, see, I was about five or six years old when she would talk about these things. In fact, I was fourteen when she passed. But she never did talk... Well, you know, they didn't talk about that to children. They perhaps talked about it to adults. But to children, you never entered into that conversation or even to listening most of the time. The most that she talked to us was when... like, for example, we were small children and she lived from about here to Scott street... we'll say the end of Scott Street here... from the family ['s house]. She always wanted to be independent. My greatgrandfather had passed and the family always arranged to have a place for her. She could take care of herself and she was able to do for herself. She didn't go blind until she was one hundred and twelve years old. And then, of course, she came to... you know, we would have to... always someone would have to be there with her. And rather than disturb her--see, they would never move her--just somebody would always go there and stay with her until such time [as] she passed.
- JW: But of her life in Africa, did she say she lived in a town or a village or...?
- AN: That I don't remember, see, because, as I told you, I was just about... I wasn't ten... twelve years old when she passed.
- JW: How did she... did she say anything about... did she have an accent? Did she learn English well?

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AN: Yes, she spoke English very good. Yes, she really did.

JW: What was her general feeling about slavery? How was she treated?

AN: She said this: she didn't work in the fields. She worked, you know, in the...around the house for the slaveowners.

JW: Was she with the same family a lot, or was she sold from place to place?

AN: No, she was with only one family. She never was sold. And she married my greatgrandfather. You know, they were in at the same place and they stayed right in the same place. They came to...she was brought to Rapides Parish and she remained in Rapides Parish.

JW: Was she sold on the auction block when she got here?

AN: Now that I don't know. I never heard her say. See, because I was too young to ask questions like those or to think of things like that. But I never heard her discuss it that way when she came. Of course, I remember my grandfather. He used to love to tease her. Like you said...he'd say, "Now you know very well that you got whipped by a White overseer." And she says, "No "W--[White Man]" ever put a hand on this!" (Chuckle) "I'd a killed him!" She had a heavy voice, you know, like a contralto voice.

JW: How did she know she was descended from Cleopatra?

AN: Because she said she was. And she had beautiful features. She didn't have...you know, beautiful features. Her hair was perfectly straight, down to her waistline. That's what she said and that's all we had, you know, to go by.

JW: Well, let's discuss your family's background just a little bit. Your mother's maiden name was?

AN: Cristine Chatman, C-h-a-t-m-a-n.

JW: And she was born where?

AN: In Rapides Parish.

JW: And about when, do you remember?

AN: Let me see...My mother would be ninety...she would be ninety-two now. So you can take it from that. And she was born July 27th.



JW: And what was her family.... END TAPE

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AN: And she had beautiful hair down to her waistline, thin lips. Her nose was just a little bit broad, not much. Beautiful eyes. Nice shape.

JW: What was her family circumstance? Were they farmers as well?

AN: My grandparents, see...you remember I gave you that previously.

JW: Okay. So you're on your mother's side of the family.

AN: Yes. When she was old enough to, you know, take on a little extra work like girls did, well, she would work, say, for one of the White families, you know, take care... stay with their children or something like that.

JW: Did she go to school?

AN: Yes.

JW: How far did she manage to make it?

AN: Just about the fifth grade.

JW: Yes. Why did she drop out or why did she leave?

AN: She got married. (Chuckle)

JW: In the fifth grade?

AN: Well, she was about fourteen, and she married when she was fifteen. They married very young in those days.

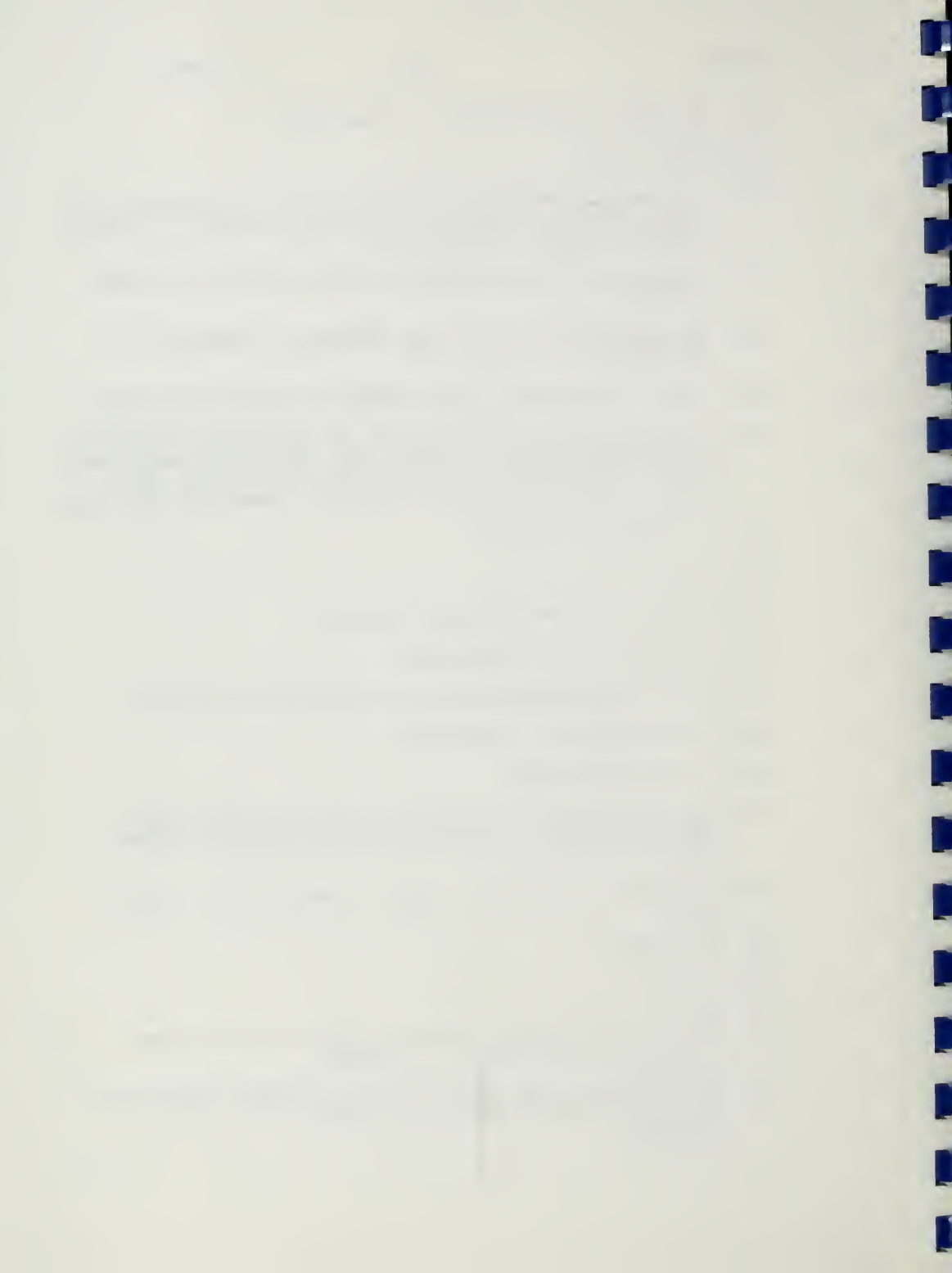
JW: What was her husband? (Well, I guess we will get to him.)

AN: My father?

JW: Right.

AN: Well, that's when I told you--that she was number three [the third wife]. (Chuckle)

JW: Did she ever discuss any of her childhood experiences... experience with prejudice or anything like that, or violence?



AN: No, she never did. See, my paternal grandfather passed when my mother was just about nine years old...ten years old she was, I would say, because there were seven children. And that's when I told you my Creole grandfather married my grandmother. He raised them all and married them all off. He married her off too. She was the oldest, and so she was the first one that he married off. There was only one brother and he already was out and old enough to be working on his own when my step-grandfather married my grandmother.

JW: What were her chief interests?

AN: My mother?

JW: Yes.

AN: She...my father being older than my mother...I don't know what she wanted to do before she married. But with my father being old enough for [to be] her father, he treated her just like you would an older daughter, you know, like a child. He trained her. He would go select her clothes, because he traveled all over and everything. And he just pampered her. That's the way she was treated.

JW: Did she spend her time with sororities or church, or political activities?

AN: No, there was no sororities at that time. We didn't have any college students, you know, to do that at that time.

JW: What made you decide to get married at such a...

AN: Early age.

JW: Well, it seems early to us now.

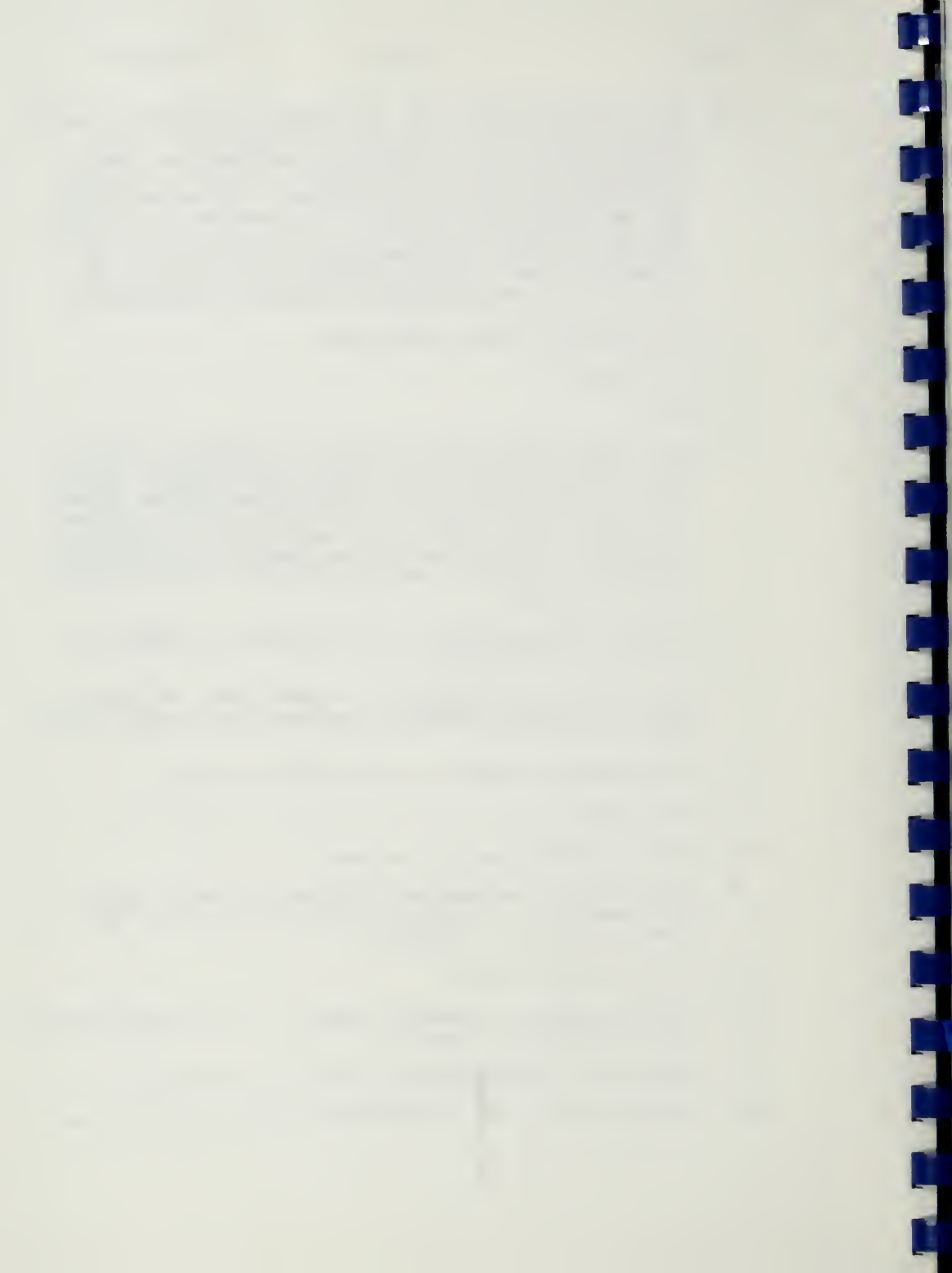
AN: Yes. Well, it was because that was the thing they did in those days. (Chuckle) Finish eighth grade and then get married. (Chuckle)

JW: Did you like school?

AN: I loved school. It [leaving school to get married] was the only mistake that I made.

JW: What kind of school was it? Was it a one-room...?

AN: Public school. No, we had two...it was, not even one



AN: room. It was like a large hall. It was a hall where they would hold meetings. It was an upstairs and a downstairs. The largest auditorium part was downstairs where they...I guess when they had their conventions and things, they would meet down there. Then upstairs it was rooms where they were partitioned off like for second, third grades like that, and kindergarten, that would go upstairs. That's the way it was. And we had a teacher. Our teacher...principal...she came from New Orleans and she was from...I think she was a graduate of Straight University (or whatever it was in Louisiana at that time). She was very nice and she stayed with my parents, the teacher did...my mother and father.

JW: What were you favorite subjects?

AN: English. Reading. Literature.

JW: Were you the teacher's "pet"?

AN: No.

JW: Did teachers have "pets" in the school?

AN: No. No. She treated everyone the same.

JW: Did they spank children in the schools?

AN: No, they would have a little switch and hit them in the hand. When it was necessary, and that was seldom. They had them under very good control. We didn't have any of that [disruption] hardly. And it was...both teachers were women. See, we didn't have a male teacher at that time.

JW: Did they make children sit in the corner when they misbehaved or something like that...wear a dunce cap or any of that?

AN: No. You know when they would punish them? Wouldn't let them go out at lunch time or recess. That way.

JW: Did you...walking this five miles, were you on time every day?

AN: Oh, sure. Never was late.

JW: Winter, summer, spring, or fall?

AN: That's right. Didn't mind it at all.



Figure 1: A line graph showing the trend of the variable over time. The x-axis represents the year, and the y-axis represents the value. The data shows a general upward trend with some fluctuations.

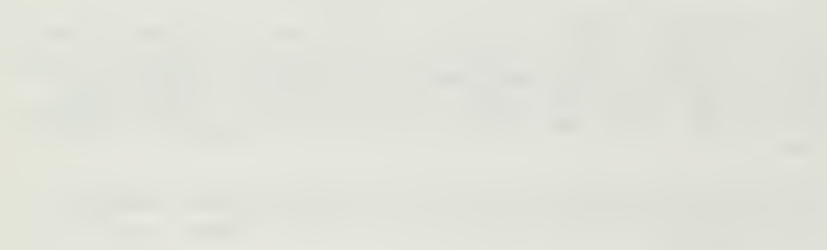


Figure 2: A bar chart showing the distribution of values across different categories. The x-axis represents the category, and the y-axis represents the value. The values increase progressively from category A to E.

1

JW: What did your parents feel about the fact that there were segregated schools? Did they accept it as just a fact of life?

AN: It was just a part of life.

JW: Did they ever discuss Jim Crow? Did they discuss the racial facts of life to you?

AN: No. Never did.

JW: Did you feel it being a disadvantage to be Colored?

AN: No. Not at all.

JW: When do you think you first were aware of it--of being Colored and that that made a difference?

AN: Personally, I can't say at any time in my life I ever felt that way...about, you know, things like that. Because having...you know, as I told you, that the family that lived next door was White, and they had all those kids and everything. We grew up together. And even after I came to San Francisco in 1920...The youngest son of that family, they in time...they had some land and hit oil on their land. So naturally they became very wealthy. But Charles, the youngest boy--he was about three years older than me--he went in the Navy...not the Navy...Marines. He went in the Marines and so in 1923...I came to San Francisco in 1920...and so in 1924 I was walking down Market Street. That was my lunch hour and I was walking down Market Street. I looked up and here was this Marine in uniform. You know how nice they look in a uniform. And he looked up and he saw me and he said, "Oh, Augustine, to see somebody I know right on Market Street!" And people just stopped and started to gaping at us. (Chuckle).

JW: Was he of the Fairfax family?

AN: No, he was White.

JW: Oh, what was that family's name?

AN: Williams. I told you that...Because one time his mother said to me, she said, "What is your last name?" I said, "Same as yours." (Chuckle) She said, "Maybe you're related to my family." I said, "No. I'm not." (Chuckle).

JW: What was most likely to make you angry as a child...

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the origin of life.

2. The second part of the paper is devoted to a detailed study of the chemical evolution of life.

3. The third part of the paper is devoted to a study of the biological evolution of life.

4. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the social evolution of life.

5. The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the cultural evolution of life.

6. The sixth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the spiritual evolution of life.

7. The seventh part of the paper is devoted to a study of the moral evolution of life.

8. The eighth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the political evolution of life.

9. The ninth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the economic evolution of life.

10. The tenth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the scientific evolution of life.

11. The eleventh part of the paper is devoted to a study of the artistic evolution of life.

12. The twelfth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the religious evolution of life.

JW: As a young teenager?

AN: Hm-m-m. I can't think of anything.

JW: Were you upset often? Did people consider you "sassy"?

AN: No. Not at all. You wasn't raised that way. (Chuckle) You wasn't sassy. You always respected your elders... regardless. Whatever you may think, you didn't express it.

JW: Did other children play tricks on you or do anything that got you upset?

AN: No, we always played nicely together.

JW: Did you have pets?

AN: Yes. Cats. We have one now. (Chuckle) I had to stop and put her in a kennel yesterday on my way down [from Palo Cedro]. She's Manx. And she's just adorable.

JW: What's her name?

AN: April.

JW: How long have you had her?

AN: She came to us as a stray in 1975, when my husband was here in San Francisco. I went out on the deck and I heard, "Meou." And I looked and it was this little cat. And she was half starved. She was just a...I don't know whether someone had dropped her, she was a stray or what. But, to make a long story short, when I opened the door she came in and she just crawled around my legs, you know, [as if to say] "Please don't send me away." And I fixed some food and fed her. And Alvin [Nurse] was here in San Francisco---that's my husband---and he called that evening. And I said... We had had a poodle, see, up until December '74. That was the house pet and as spoiled as he could be. That was his dog. And so, I told him about this cat. I said, "What shall we name her?" So he said, "Is she pregnant?" I said, "I don't know." "Well," he says, "Let's name her April." You know that show that played called "Hot, Baltimore"? You remember the girl who ran the place, named April. So he said, "Let's name her April." That's where she got the name. (Chuckle). Oh, dear, don't you record all of that.

JW: You first got married to Mr. Johnny Beverly?

AN: In 19...15?

JW: And how had you met him? Under what circumstances?

AN: Went to school...same school.

JW: So he was a neighbor?

AN: Not...he lived in...For example, you know, as I told you, the town was in the center. And the school was in the center. Farmers on, we say, [the side of town] going north and we going south, on the other side, south. But we went to the same school.

JW: How did he court you? How did he make it clear he wanted to marry you?

AN: Well, when...they had a large family. That was a huge family. They had about thirteen children in that family. And so...and, of course, they had a large acreage of land that they cultivated. And as the older boys and girls grew up, they left home. So then they discarded...you know, left that and got a smaller place. Then that brought them closer to us. That was the association. It started that way.

JW: Do you remember when he proposed?

AN: Yes. (Chuckle)

JW: Where were you?

AN: At home.

JW: At your house?

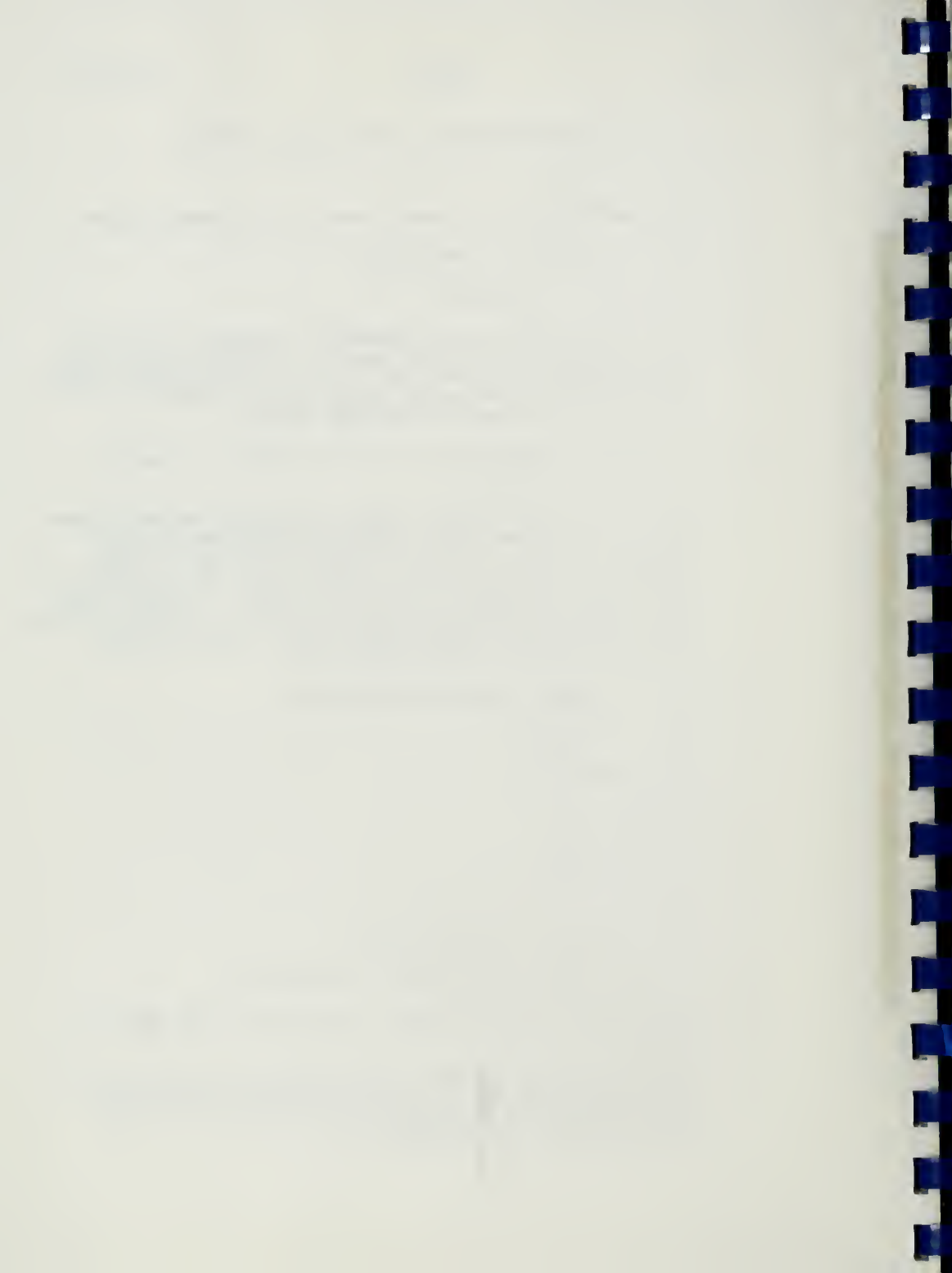
AN: Yes.

JW: So he made it a formal thing?

AN: Yes, like they always done in those days.

JW: How did your parents react to him and to the idea of marriage?

AN: Well, my father thought that I was too...he wanted me to go on to school...go on to college. He thought I was making a mistake by getting married so young. But, that was just too bad.



JW: What about your mother?

AN: My mother was...never expressed how she felt, you know, about something like that. My grandmother was opposed to it, because she was the one who raise me. But that was the way it was.

JW: On the basis of youth again? Or was it him?

AN: Yes, youth.

JW: They liked him?

AN: Yes... All right.

JW: What was his background?

AN: About the same as mine--farm boy--grew up, you know. Had a nice family. He was [from] a family of thirteen children. He was about the seventh child.

JW: How long were you married to him?

AN: Hm-m-m. About two years.

JW: That was rather short.

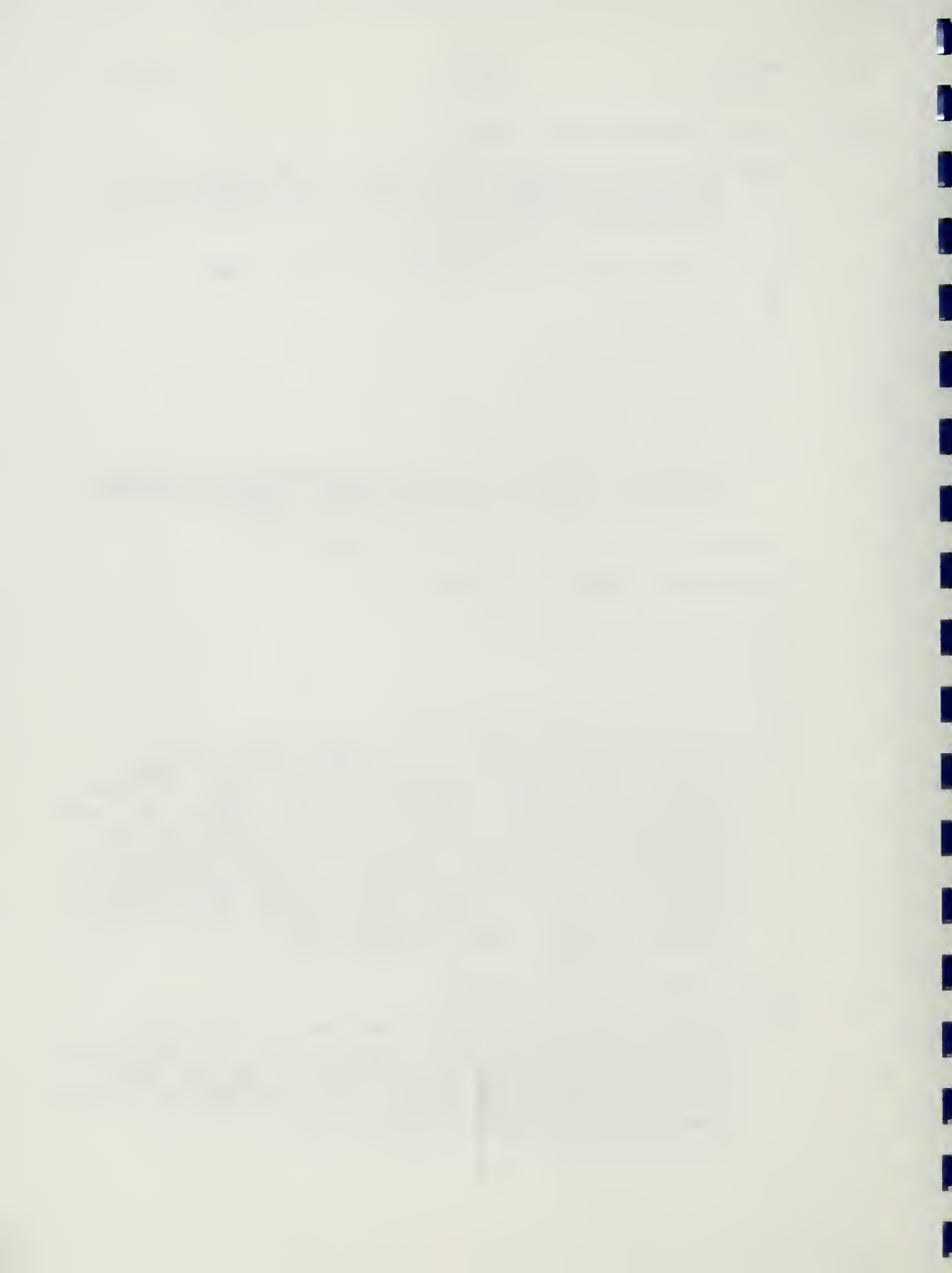
AN: It was.

JW: Why didn't it survive longer?

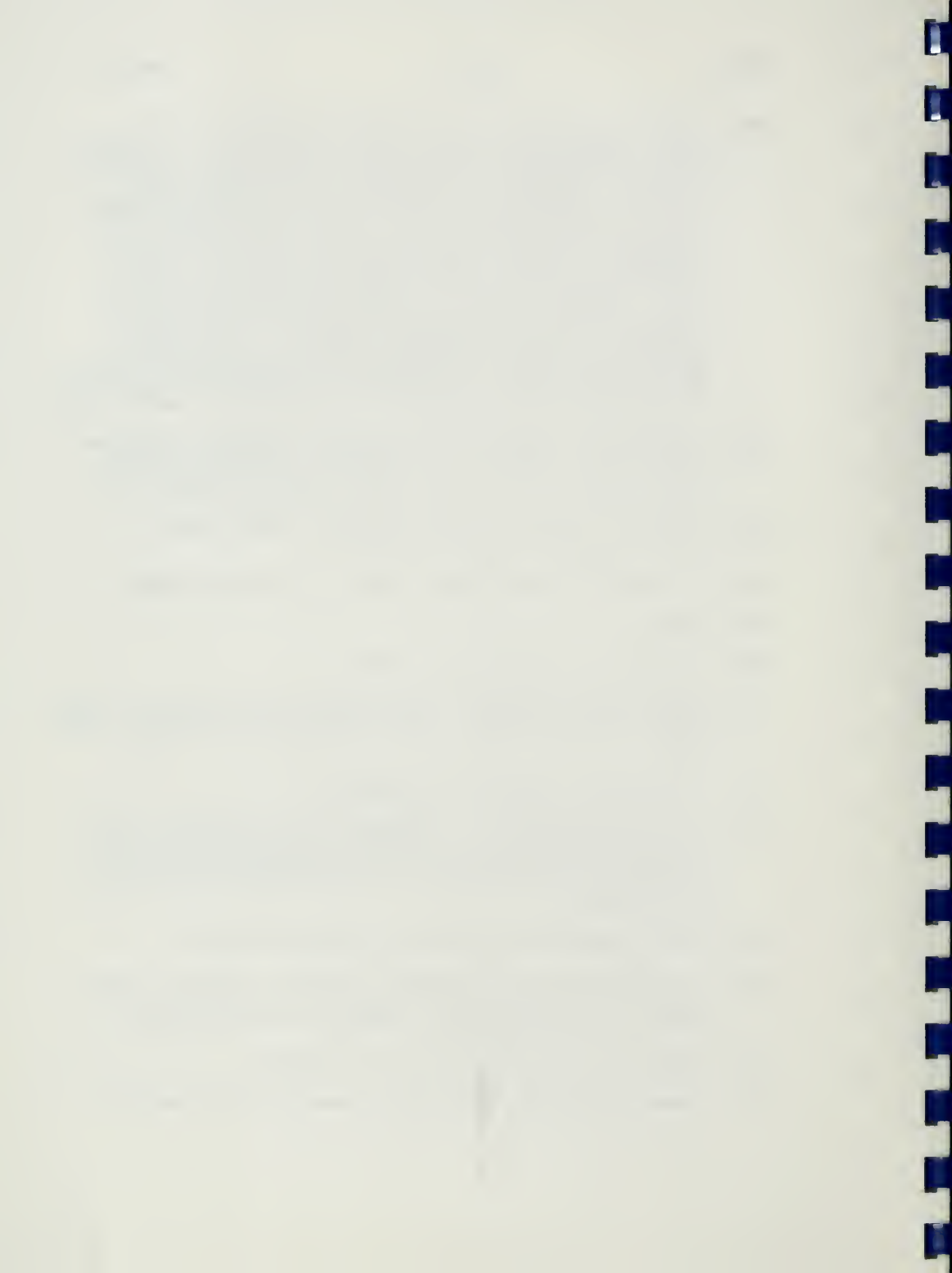
AN: Well...he had a sister...his sister...One of his sisters was married and she lived in Dallas, Texas. And he...and after we were married she told...you know, felt that we could do better by coming there. See, her husband was a railroad man and he was on a private car. And he [brother-in-law] could get him [husband] on this private car, with him, you know, for the President and all like that. And so we went to Dallas to live after my baby was born. He went first and got employment and got on the road. He was in that same club car. So we lived in Dallas, Texas. My baby was...

JW: How did you like Dallas?

AN: Dallas was a beautiful city and had...you know, when you are that age you have...your mind is very impressive about all of the things. I digress to say that when President Kennedy was killed, I know exactly the location where it was because I had lived there, in Dallas. I knew just exactly where the site was.



- AN: And so he was on the road and he liked it and all. What I didn't know, see, before, was that he had been there and stayed a while before we married. And there had been a case of...What do we call it?--Unfaithfulness. [There] was a girl that had become pregnant by him. And at that time in the state of Texas if a married man--I was home, see--if a married man does something like that, they put him in jail. Did you know that? (Chuckle). I went back home to have my baby. And when...the same day that my daughter was born, he was put in jail that night. And so that happened. So then naturally I didn't know anything about it, you know, didn't know anything about that until I came back to Dallas to live and was living with his sister and her husband. So that was an unfortunate..
- JW: What did they think that putting somebody in jail was going to do? That was only going to deprive them of some income--would make it even worse, wouldn't it?
- AN: That was one of the laws of Dallas, Texas that I... that, you know, that they did.
- JW: Did they put White men in jail for the same thing?
- AN: Sure.
- JW: How long did they have to stay?
- AN: Now I never did know all the details about that. That's what it was all about. And then he had to support that baby.
- JW: So he had to support two families?
- AN: Well, just the baby. Because, see, she went on back to...she was still in high school and she went on back to school. Then later she left and went to another... went to Virginia to live...I think married and lived in Virginia.
- JW: Did you like living with your sister-in-law?
- AN: I later found out it was the greatest mistake I could have made, you know. Because she was aware of everything that was happening. [But] I didn't know it.
- JW: How did you go about getting a divorce?
- AN: I went back to Louisiana and stayed with my parents.



JW: And just filed legal papers? Did he have to come to sign anything?

AN: No, he didn't have to come.

JW: Was there alarm or...How did your family feel? Did they think that divorce was the solution to the problem?

AN: Oh, my father felt certainly. See, my father didn't approve...didn't want me to marry him, anyway. So he was all for it [the divorce].

JW: How did you feel about it? Were you...You're sixteen and you've got a baby and a husband who's away.

AN: Well, it didn't bother me because I was always...Then when that happened I went back home and I got me a job working in a beauty...White beauty salon as a maid, and worked right on up to an operator in the shop.

JW: When did you decide to leave Alexandria?

AN: In 1920. My oldest brother, see, was living here in San Francisco. He had been living in San Francisco ten years. That was the one, you know, the second family my father had.

JW: The Spanish family?

AN: Yes. My oldest brother was living here in San Francisco. Then too, when the weather get too hot, I was always... not "down", but seemed like all the life would be out of me. So after he lived here ten years, he told me.. he wrote and told me, he said "I think San Francisco would be the place you should come to live." And I've been healthy ever since.

JW: Did you consider moving anywhere else?

AN: Not until 1966. That's when we decided...bought some land up in the country and built up there.

JW: How did you get out here? Where did you get the money from...the beauty parlor that you were working in?

AN: No, my brother sent me money to come. The one that was living here. Had an apartment and everything for us.

JW: Well, did he...How did he even make the suggestion that you come here? Was he aware that you were...Were you unhappy or...?



AN: Oh, it was health-wise.

JW: Health?

AN: Yes. See, heat...oh, when the weather would get too hot, I wouldn't be ill. But I would just be like something, you know, all the life was drained out of me, like that.

JW: How did you find the first job that you got here?

AN: In San Francisco? I had met...you know, how you meet young people. She's living here in San Francisco. Oh, yes. So she was working downtown in one of the department stores as an elevator girl and they needed another girl. So she told me about it. I went there and started work there. So I did that for about three years before I went into beauty work. And my going into that work...It was a beauty salon, White salon, right next door to the store downtown. I would go in and talk with her. Pretty soon I was into work.

JW: Was this job as an elevator operator something that was...

AN: It was a department store.

JW: ...Colored girls could get? Was this a job that was considered one of "our" jobs, or was it integrated? I mean were there White women doing the same thing?

AN: They had White girls to relieve you. Then working on the elevator. And then pretty soon one of the girls, Colored girls, she just...you know how stores used to have those big sales starting Monday morning and all... and she would never show up. So, I don't know...the management got together and talked about [what to do about her]. So it was just two elevators...there was just three...you know, I was a relief girl...no, I was on the elevator first. So they talked about that. And, see, an elevator was at one end of the store and one was at the other. And so, making a long story short, they decided they'd make a change. So they put in Chinese girls on the elevators. Then I relieved the girls and I worked on the wrapping desk.

JW: As a young woman you were light enough to "pass"?

AN: I wouldn't say "pass". I just looked different. (Chuckle)



JW: Would this make a difference? I mean, if you had been darker-skinned, would they have hired you?

AN: One of the girls on the elevator was a dark brown-skinned girl.

JW: What about in the wrapping department?

AN: Well...I think you would say if you took an interest in something around you and do it, then it wouldn't make no difference. I don't think it would have made no difference, because they were Jews that were operating this big store. They had six stores in California at that time.

JW: What was the store...what is it now called?

AN: It's gone out of business. They went out of business completely because one man had two sons and the other had a daughter, and he was French. And he said he saw no future, you know, to continue. So then they started to pulling in the stores. They had a store in Fresno. Even in Seattle they had a store and Oregon and all... had six stores. So they started pulling them in.

JW: What was the name of the store?

AN: Reich and Levre.

JW: How do you spell it?

AN: R-e-i-c-h, that was Reich. The other was L-e-v-r-e, Levre.

JW: What was this work like? Was it boring?

AN: No. It was interesting...[being] around beautiful clothes.

JW: What was that?

AN: Around beautiful clothes. (Laughter)

JW: Did you...you know, did people talk to you while they were riding the elevator?

AN: Oh, sure.

JW: Was it hard on your feet?

AN: No.



JW: Were you seated or standing?

AN: You had a seat if you wanted to sit down. There was the type elevator, you know, that you had to pull the door from the end, and you'd have to stand up to open the door and close it.

JW: Did you ever get tips for that?

AN: No, they didn't do that then.

JW: What was the income like?

AN: They paid your salary--straight salary.

JW: What was it?

AN: It was comparable to what everybody else was drawing. It started off at seventy-five dollars a month and went up to ninety.

JW: Were there any unions?

AN: No. That wasn't heard of then.

JW: Well, there were no opportunities for advancement, were there? I mean, where would you...Was it considered that you would start here and you could move into wrapping and then into something else...become a salesgirl...?

AN: I think we'd say that if you applied yourself and showed you had an interest and wanted to do things. Because, see, as I told you, I worked on the elevator. Then I went on the wrapping desk, because I enjoyed doing that and fixing packages up beautiful and things like that. And I'd go up in alterations. They had an alteration department. It was on the top floor, and I used to go up there and sit with the ladies and watch them do alteration work. They's show me how to do some of the things...alteration work.

JW: Did you feel the restriction that being a woman you weren't going to go very far in the business world?

AN: No, I never had that feeling. Never did. I felt that if you qualified to do a job, you could do it. Personally, I was not interest in doing a man's job. I always wanted to do what a woman ordinarily would do.

JW: What do you think of the current movement for women's liberation?



AN: Well, we are living in an age where advancement is taking place in everything. And I guess women want to do just that particular thing.

JW: Did you feel in general in your social life that being female was a disadvantage?

AN: No, I never did...Because, see, after I left the store, then I worked in this beauty salon. Then I opened my own salon in San Francisco. I had a beauty salon for thirty-one years in this city.

JW: What was the name of that?

AN: "ARNISE'S", my middle name.

JW: And that was located...?

AN: I had four locations. First I was on Sutter, 1930 Sutter. Then I moved to 1928 Fillmore. And then I moved to Divisadero Street and Sutter. Then we--you know that office building right up there on the corner of Steiner?...You've seen that building. I was one of the promoters for that building. We incorporated and set that building up. There were six flats and we turned it into offices. That was the first Negro, Black office building here in the city.

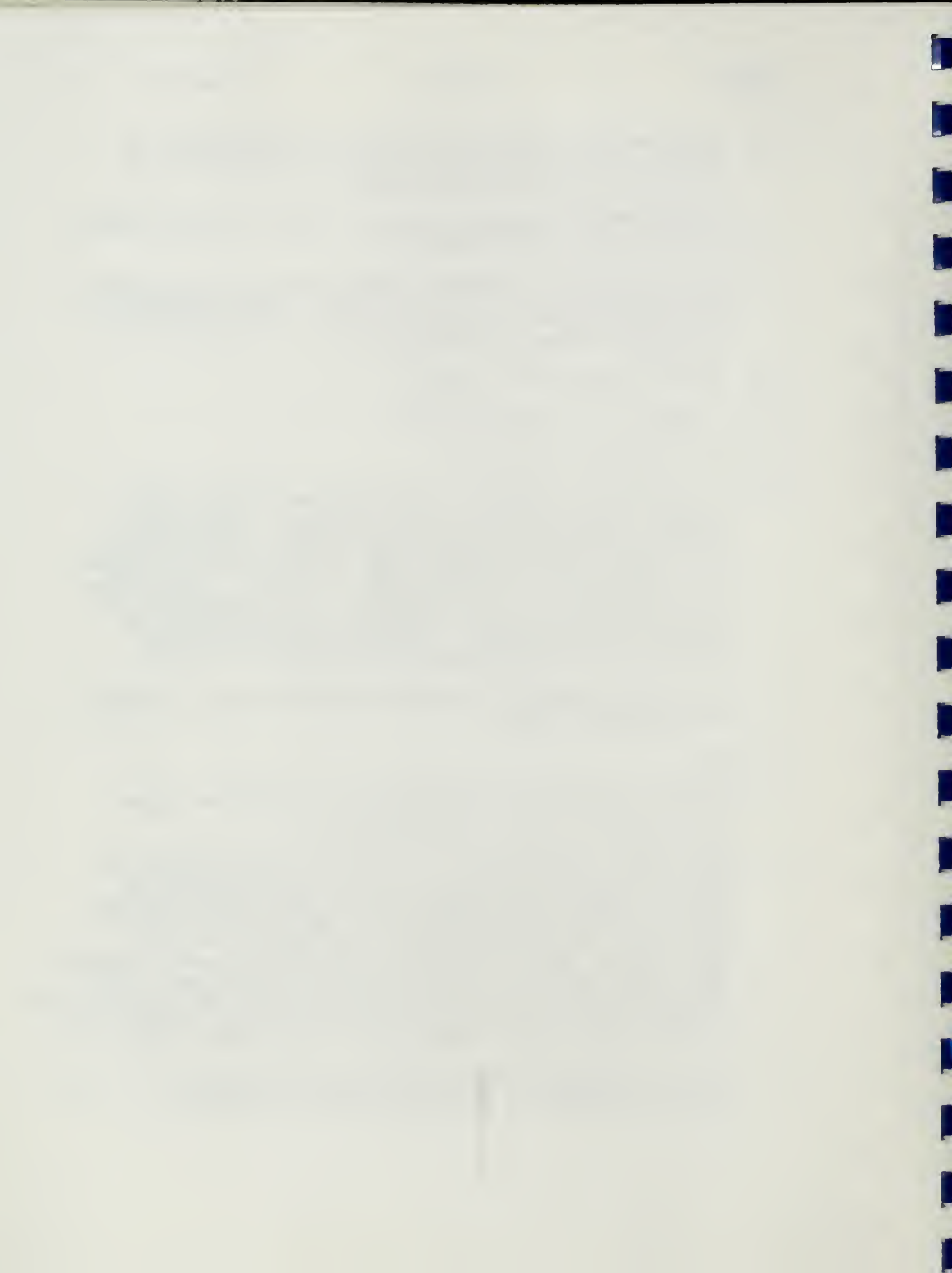
JW: Did people consider it unusual that you were a successful business woman?

AN: No.

JW: Did you have any association with any kind of Black professional woman's organizations?

AN: They hadn't started any. It was so few...You see, we didn't get a big population until the War broke out and all those people came here for that type of work. Then you had a large number, and particular people who were, say, college graduates, and things like that; that's when they all started to coming in here. Because, most, when they would graduate from college here, they always went East in order to get the position that they had trained for. The population wasn't enough, you know, to ...you didn't have a strong vote. Put it that way.

JW: Did you have any association with the [Madame C.J.] Walker line of products or the [Elizabeth] Poro School?



AN: No. No. See, because when I opened my shop, it was past that type. See, I opened in '31. And those products...both of these women's products, they didn't [in]filtrate into San Francisco as thick as they did in the South. You see, they didn't push the products up here as they did in the South.

JW: So whose products were you carrying primarily? Who were you dealing with?

AN: Whatever store I was dealing with, you know, beauty supply houses. And then I didn't operate my shop [as a] strictly Negro shop. It was interracial. Anyone who wanted to come could be served. Because I had... we...I had trained. And the operators that worked with me had trained and they could do either one--White hair or Colored hair, either one. And I had White trade as well as Colored. Right here in the same... right there at Sutter...between Sutter and Bush and Fillmore...Webster and Fillmore. That was the first location.

JW: Did you have to buy special products for kinky-haired people?

AN: You bought the...they had pomades and things like... [interruption].

JW: Well, in the salon...as the...were you in the...Did you keep your own books?

AN: Oh, sure.

JW: You didn't hire an accountant?

AN: No. Only when, you know, the end of the year, for tax purpose, that's all.

JW: So were you involved in and actually doing the work very often? Or were you only involved in supervision?

AN: Oh, yes, I did the work as well. Always. See, because people coming...they have a psychology of thinking that the manager or owner does the best work. When they'd call in, you know, and want me to do their work, well, I would take them, see, rather than...Then after they'd come several times, then I'd refer them to another operator, see, and there was no offense, see, that way.

JW: How did you get employees?



AN: Girls that went to school...Helen [Mrs. Kline Wilson] was one of my girls...Wilson...you know, that you interviewed?

JW: Oh, Yes.

AN: I married her right from my shop. (Chuckle) That was one of my children. Her mother and I were very close friends. We were in Eastern Star chapter together. When her mother was ill, I...that was before I had started work in the beauty shop...I was a housewife then. And I would go over and sit with her mother because she had a heart condition. I would go over and sit with her and stay with her. Then when she passed, I felt very close to Helen and I would do things for her and help her until she got started. Then when she finished high school...She went to Commerce [High] and she took up typing and all that. See, at that time it was no fields open--for Black girls, we'll say. And so she...and so I told her to go and take beauty culture. And she took that work. And she worked with me until she...And I married her and Kline. I married her and Kline off together.

JW: How did women select the styles? Were they avid readers of the magazines?

AN: You had beauty supply magazines. You had magazines, White, that you could fix the styles and adjust it to go any style hair you want, see. Then when Black magazines came in, then we subscribed for them, too, and had them.

JW: Who was in the...Who set the styles in the Thirties and Forties? The "society"...the more...

AN: Hollywood.

JW: Hollywood?

AN: Yes, I would say. And "Modern Beauty." That was a magazine which is still on the market. That was a White magazine and they set the styles...They just sent you magazines. See, with all those styles and instructions how to do them and everything...a chart and all of that. That kept you right up with everything.

JW: Did you do facial treatments and manicure and all of that?



AN: Yes, all of that...complete line. I had a line of cosmetics made up in Chicago with "Arnise's" on them... "Arnise's Cosmetics." They'd make them up and put your name on them.

JW: I wanted to get a little bit into the whole question of women's self-concept...

AN: At the present time?

JW: Well, let me put it another way: what did women talk about in the beauty salon? Was it a place where people would gossip?

AN: No, I didn't permit that, because we had booths. See, like shops are open today. You walk in and see everybody getting their work done. We...I didn't have that type of shop. They had private booths. Each operator had a booth that she worked in. And I always kept a radio in the shop that played music softly, not too loud, so that...END TAPE.

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AN: Oh, definitely, they always do with operators. And you see, I didn't permit my operators to discuss it[gossip] when they went out. We would have a...I, having trained and worked in a first-class White shop downtown and saw how an operation should be...Then, see, when Macy's moved to San Francisco...that was before I opened my shop, and I was working in a White shop...and they wanted, I guess,, all nationalities to be in the shop. So they opened a beauty salon in the store right there where they are at the present time. They had fourteen for...in a great big beauty salon. So they were looking for a girl. And I had a friend and she was working for Elizabeth Arden...and so they wanted someone. So I went in and worked on the desk as a receptionist, you know, on the desk for a long time. Then, of course, I knew how to prepare all the things that they wanted to use. They had a regular dispensary and then they had a girl in the dispensary that...this girl didn't know how to do it, but she had been offered the job. So I helped her to know how to do the dispensary work. Then I worked on the appointment desk for a long time. All of that was before I went into the business. So, you see, I knew the things that...you do and don't do in a shop.

JW: I guess I'm still pressing the point about gossip. I would assume that...they say bartenders know a lot about human psychology.

AN: That's true.

JW: I was wondering whether or not...Did people come in there and pour out their souls? Did people come in there and...I mean, did you feel that you...people talked about their marriages or their children? Or what was it that they talked about?

AN: Well, it depended on what problem they were having. They would talk about it...I don't know about, you know, the other girls. But I always asked them to, if a customer come in and talk to them about things, just leave it drip (sic)...forget it. And there was no reason that anyone else could hear what was being discussed in the next booth, because as I told you, I kept music going all the time...soft music...so that, you know, whatever they talked about...And then when we would have a meeting, and if one of the operators would bring up a subject, you know, about someone, we would always throw it out. I said that isn't the thing to talk about. Because, you see, you never know who's friend to who...always...you never. So I never had one person at no time to come up and say, "you said this" or "your operator done this," or anything like that. And I had very attractive girls. I always selected very attractive girls. I married them off--most of them. (Laughter) But never once did anybody come up there to say "your operator was doing so-and-so with my boyfriend" or something like that. Never. Nothing like that.

JW: Back to the early Twenties, where were you living?

AN: In San Francisco.

JW: Yes. You lived with your brother?

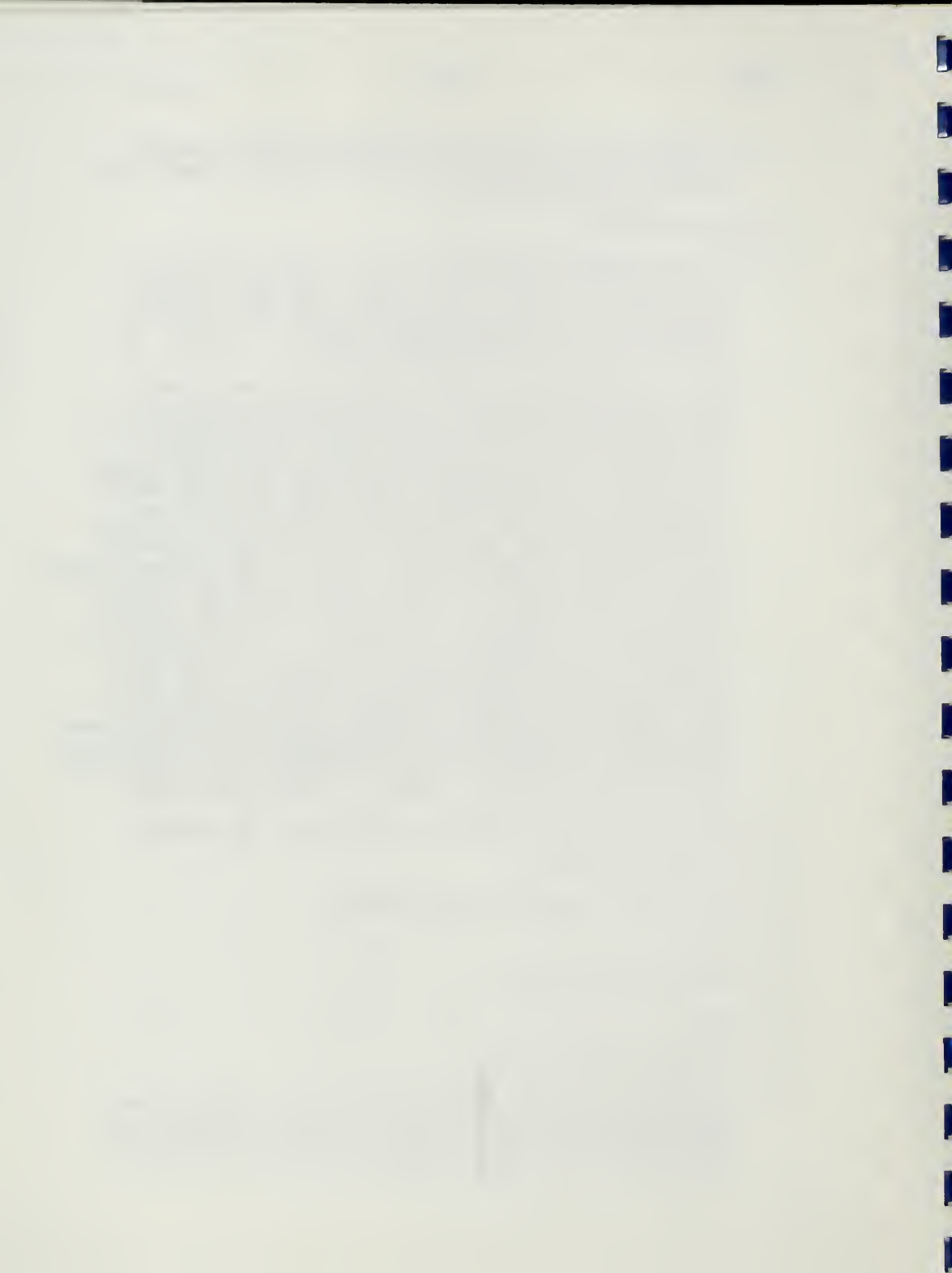
AN: Yes.

JW: When you first came?

AN: Yes.

JW: Did you stay with him?

AN: He had an apartment for me. We lived at 1440 Golden Gate Avenue in San Francisco. It was a flat and then three apartments, and he had rented one of the apartments there. You know where that church is directly



AN: across the street? Well, that was built [unintelligible]...a Presbyterian church, a White Presbyterian church, because that was the only Colored family in this block was the people that had that flat...those flats and those three apartments. That's where we lived. And my daughter went to that little school. That was the first school she went to.

JW: I thought that your daughter had told me that at some point you lived in a Madame C. J. Walker Home.

AN: I did.

JW: When was that?

AN: That was before I decided to go into business.

JW: What was that place like?

AN: Beautiful. It was a beautiful...It still is. We sold it and I remained active...I was the first person to live there. When they opened it, it was just me and the matron. And the matron would like to go to church on Sunday nights--that's when they had services, you know, on Sunday nights. It was operated on the order of the YWCA: you couldn't have no dancing, no card playing or anything like that. And when the...she would go to church on Sunday night...And two or three...another couple and the fellow I was going around with, they'd come over to the house. It [there] was a big round table in the dining room, and we'd put...have newspaper...put magazines and papers [on it] . And when we'd hear her hit the door...We'd play cards. And when we'd hear her hit the door, we'd close the card game up! (Laughter)...I helped to phase it [the Home] out in the final...We sold it to two White fellows. They both are hair stylists. One is English and one is a platform artist...he goes all over. We just did that about two years ago...phased it out.

JW: What was the motivation to open the home in the first place?

AN: Because there were young girls coming from the South and different places to San Francisco. And most of them...a lot came with families, you know, in domestic work. And when they got here and the family got ready to leave, they didn't want to go back with them or didn't want to leave San Francisco. So that was where the need came. That was the reason the women got together. One of them was a very dear friend of mine...like a mother to me. That was the secretary of it...that started it.



JW: What was her name?

AN: Mrs. Mamie Morris.

JW: Did you, how did you try to...what were your precepts in raising your daughter? Were you going to raise her like you'd been raised?

AN: I couldn't very well because, you see, when I came to San Francisco, and her father and I had separated and all, I had to work, I wanted to work. Because for a year and a half, my oldest brother took care of me completely. But I didn't feel that was fair to him, see. So then...then I had her to live with a family over in Oakland. She told you about that, didn't she?

JW: Yes. The Shorey family?

AN: Yes. That's right. And she was very lovely to her.

JW: How did you locate them?

AN: I met them through Phyllis Wheatley Club. You heard them speak of the Phyllis Wheatley Club of Oakland?

JW: Yes.

AN: Well, when I came to San Francisco, they was one...my brother had a party. All of the young people that was my age lived in Oakland. And so he knew a couple over there. And so they did the inviting. You know Ruth? She's a real estate woman here now.

JW: Stovall?

AN: Yes. She was one of the guests that came to the party. That's how long I have known Ruth. And also that's the way it was...then that was how...So then when I decided to go to work, you know, get a job, and I felt that I had let my brother take care of me long enough and I wanted to do something. So that's when I got Mrs. Shorey to take care of her. Phyllis Wheatley, when I went to... they had a formal...They used to have a formal once a year....it was this select class of people in Oakland. I went to this formal, and that's where I met the girl. And the next week I got a notice that I had been selected a member of the Club, and I've been in it every since. So that was my contact there...to meet them. Then Mrs. Shorey took care of Johnnie for me for about three or four years. Then when I saw that she was getting too attached to her, I wasn't going to go for that. (Chuckle)



JW: What do you mean by "too attached"?

AN: Well, she was beginning to...one time she called her "Mama," and that just broke my heart. (Chuckle)
So then we got a place and I brought her home with me.

JW: Who is "we"? You had remarried by then?

AN: No, not then. My brother and I were living together... the one that passed. See, my oldest brother... Just briefly: He had been married before he came to San Francisco. And being my half brother, see, he had married before he had married in my grandmother's family...a relative of my grandmother's. He had two children by her. And he...and they had moved to Tucson, Arizona. Then they separated, and he...she was insanely jealous of him.--I don't say it because he was my brother, but he was very handsome. He was a handsome man. And he...It wasn't women he was attract--because he liked to gamble...[it was] one of the things he enjoyed doing...She would think that he was, you know, out with some lady when he was sitting at some gambling table. That's the way that was. So, that was the thing that started me out to do that. And then as I say, one time when I say, one time when I had her over to spent the weekend with me, and she, you know, spoke of Mrs. Shorey as "Mother," I said, "Oh, no," I can't have this." Then I started to getting...got a place. We got a place...that was my youngest brother then; See, he had come here to live.

JW: And his name...?

AN: Thomas.

JW: Did you ever feel a need to explain to Johnnie the... did you call her Johnnie or Heloise?

AN: Both.

JW: Oh.

AN: See, at school...why that came up...See, her name was Johnnie Heloise. And when she went to kindergarten...she went to Golden Gate...you know that school right up there? That's where she started. They had two boys named Johnny, and so they said, "Well, we'll call her by her middle name--Heloise."

JW: Did you feel any need at any point to explain to her that she was Colored?

AN: No.



JW: You thought she'd just find out one way or another, or that it was not that important?

AN: I didn't think it was. Because I had never seen no reasons to or outlets to make me do it, or she would have told me. I always felt that if something would come up unpleasant, she would tell me about it. Because we had a...the flat where we were living in the apartment on Golden Gate, it was a White family above us, and they had three children. Their youngest one was around the same age as she was. And they used to take her to shows and things like that. And go there...They called my brother, my youngest brother, when he came, they called him "Uncle Tom" and he got insulted. (Chuckles) They saw him on the street one day and they were walking...they were on the opposite side, and they were coming along and they looked up and saw him and said, "Oh, Uncle Tom!" They were just happy--kids, you know kids--they're innocent, you know. So my brother told them, he said, "When you see me, you call me Mr. Williams." (Laughter)

JW: Your daughter said at one point that somewhere you moved that your brother went and checked out the place and you went and checked it out and everything was okay. And then when they brought this little brown-skinned child, they were a little...they hadn't been aware that they were about to sell to Colored or rent to Colored.

AN: Rent to Colored, yes. That was on Steiner Street.

JW: Did you find that there were other incidents of that kind where you found that people had mistaken your identity in one way or the other?

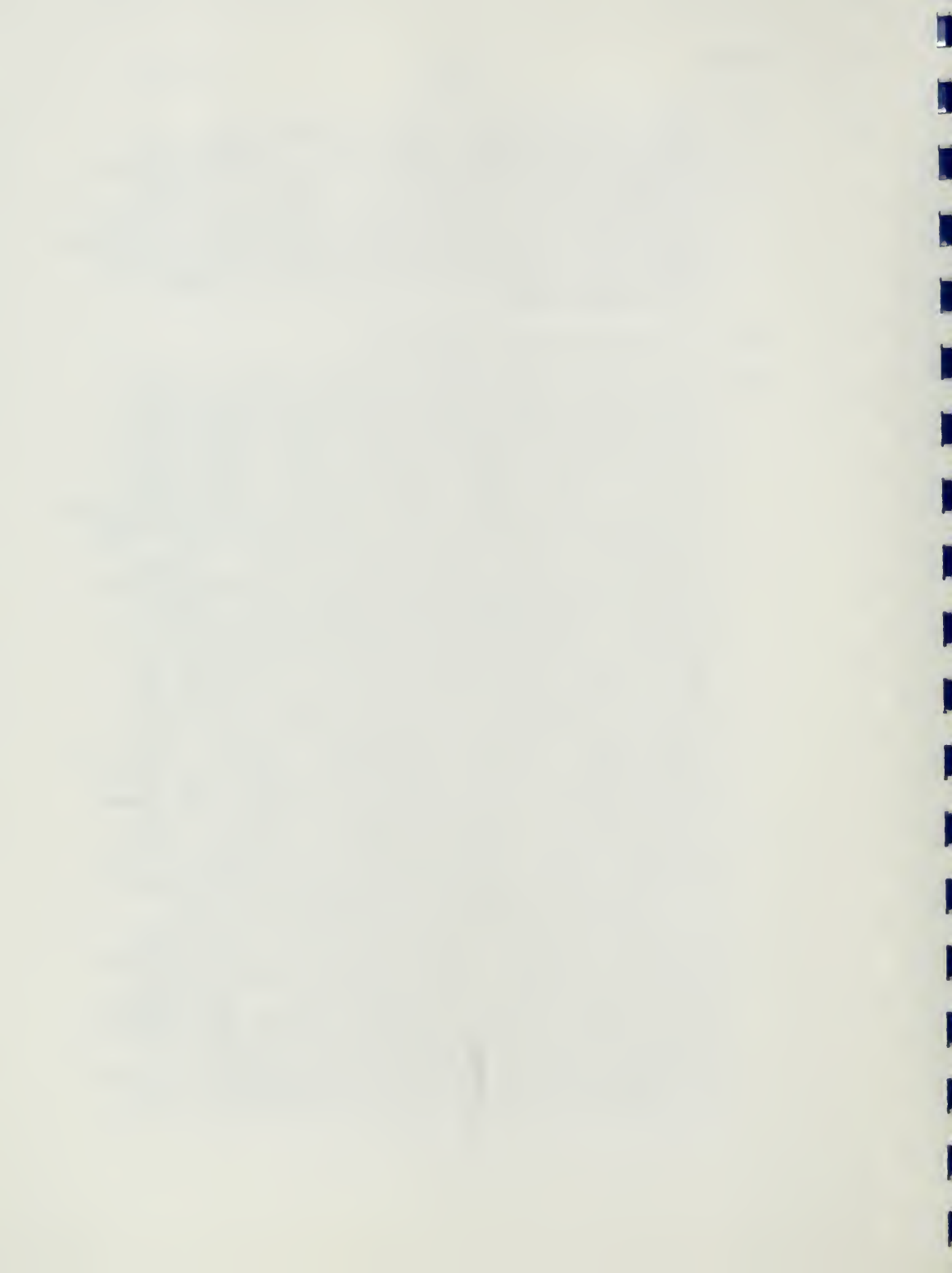
AN: No. [Talking in the background] No, I didn't. Not too much. I remarried. When I married again, we lived on Steiner Street, right near Lombard, you know, over there. And my oldest brother's daughter came from Arizona to visit for the summer. And so she spoke...Spanish was just her natural language growing up there in Tucson. And she spoke French and she spoke German and she spoke Italian.--a brilliant child...died when she was nineteen. So we were living on...when I married Mr. Saville we were living on Steiner near Turk, between Turk and Eddy. All that was just a residential area there. And that little theater, the little Princess Theater...the Fillmore Theater was the Classic Theater, see, at that time. So we lived there, and then we rented a place on the corner of Steiner and Eddy. It's an upstairs building, I

AN: think...no, Sam bought that property there. So they put some hookers there, see. My husband observed it and he said, "We got to get out ^{of} the neighborhood." Then we went over to...over on Steiner near Lombard. My husband was a native San Franciscan, a native son. His parents were both native sons and daughters. They grew up with the idea that they never wanted to do anything that would make them face prejudice, see. That's the way the natives were... Did you know that?

JW: I'm beginning to get the idea.

AN: So then we looked around at several flats. And he was driving around in the car, and I looked and I saw this flat on Steiner near Lombard...had a sign in the window, "Flat for Rent." And I said to him, "Let's go look at that." And he said, "Honey, you know they ain't gonna let us live in a place like that." I said, "Well, let's go see." And so my niece, my brother's daughter, was visiting us at that time. She was in the car with us. So I said, "Stop." We stopped and I got out and rang the bell. I said, "I notice you have a flat for rent." She said something in Italian and my niece heard her. And so she [the landlady] said, "I'd have to speak to my husband." And Erie said that's what she said. So she went and spoke to him. When he come back he said, "Well, let them go see it." So we went and looked at the flat. She said to him...and he ran... prior to Prohibition, he had ran this bar down on North Beach, the man. So she said, "Okay." And Guggenheimer, who made accordions, they lived upstairs, right next door to this flat. So we took the flat. They rented it to us. The Guggenheimers, they never said anything. They never bothered Johnie. Then when she went to grammar school...it was in walking distance, just a couple of blocks...I know she told you about that. So she went to school there, and we never had no problems or anything like that.

We both got sick and had the flu. It was a time when they had an epidemic of flu...my husband and I both was ill. And so when we got sick, I had her to go stay with a very close friend of mine so she [Johnie] wouldn't be exposed to it. And so one of the members from my chapter, Eastern Star Chapter, she came over. I told her where...she called and I told her where the house was and everything. I don't know whether she done it intentionally or just by accident, but she rang the Guggenheimers' bell.



AN: She [my friend] said that she was looking for us. So she [Mrs. Guggenheimer] said, "Well, that's right next door. Who are you looking for?" And so she [my friend] said, "It's a Colored family, you know, that lives over here that I was looking for." That's what she said she told them. They never said anything to us about it or anything, see, because...Oh, what I wanted to say was when we went to get the place...when they told us we could have it, we told them we were Colored, see. And she hollered upstairs and told her husband. And my niece was listening, you know, and interpreting everything she was saying. So he said to her, he says, "As long as they mind their own business. Do they look like the people at the Greenwich place?" She said, "No." She told him "No." He said, "Well then that's all right. Rent it to them." (Chuckle) See, and that's the way it went over there.

JW: Did you ever have an accent, a Louisiana accent?

AN: Not too much. Because, see, my father broke me from that. See, my father spoke beautiful English. And you know, like you slur the word, "Yassu" and "Nawsu" and something like that--if you'd say that, he'd almost make you jump out of your seat. "What did you say!" (Chuckle)

JW: How did you meet your second husband?

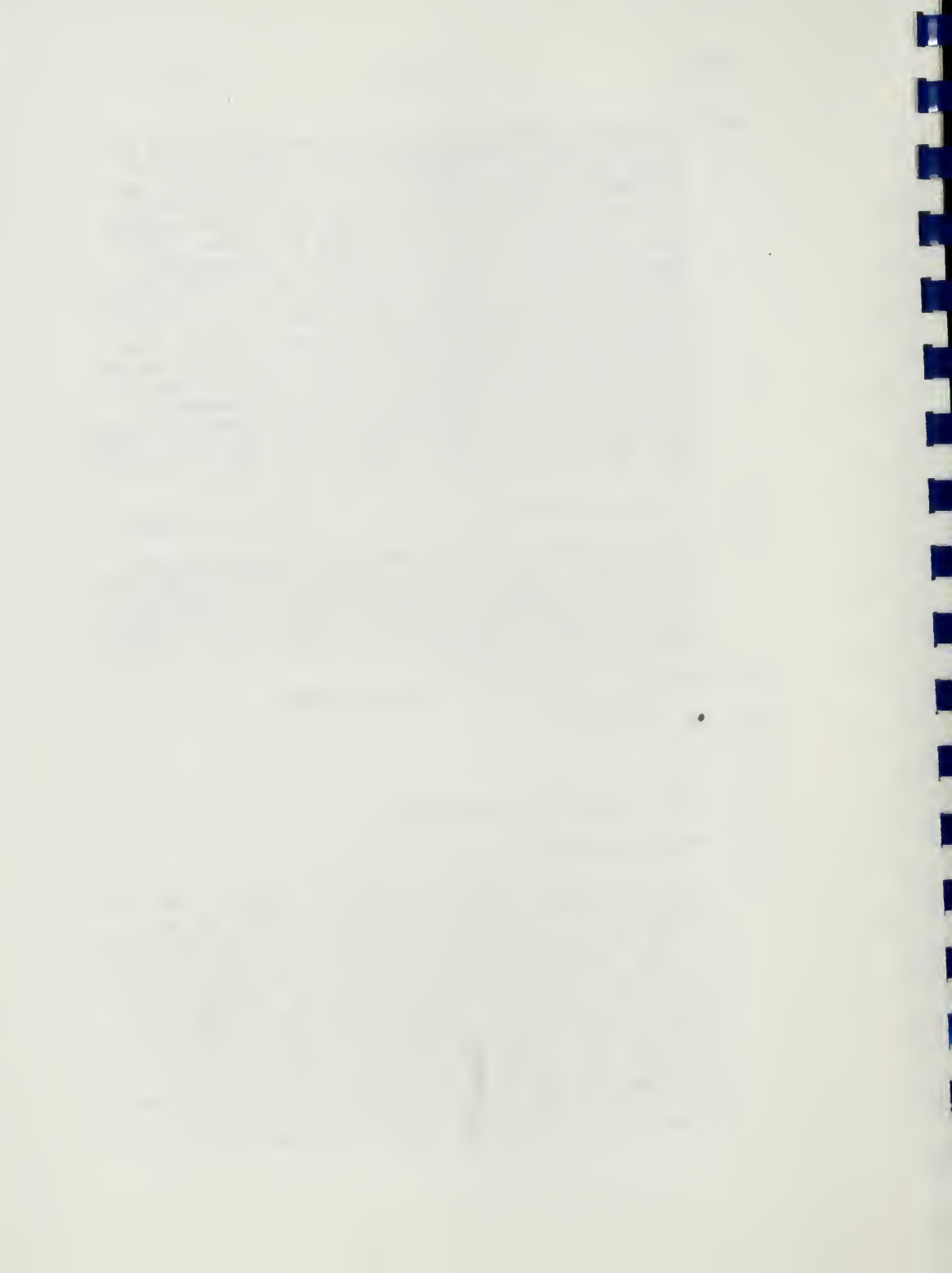
AN: Mr. Savelle?

JW: Yes.

AN: Right here in San Francisco.

JW: Under what particular circumstances?

AN: I was visiting a friend...a mutual friend. She had apartments and rooms, and she had roomers in her place, see. I went to visit her...was visiting her. And so he came out to say something to her. He told her that he was going somewhere and was going to be away--and at that time he was one of the few that had an automobile. See, that was when "Hudsons was a Hudson" [a jingle or ad], you know...and he had a Hudson car. And that was all, you know, she introduced me to him and that was all that was said. So then when he met another person that was a native daughter that he knew, and they were talking, he said to her that he had met "Mrs."...because I always



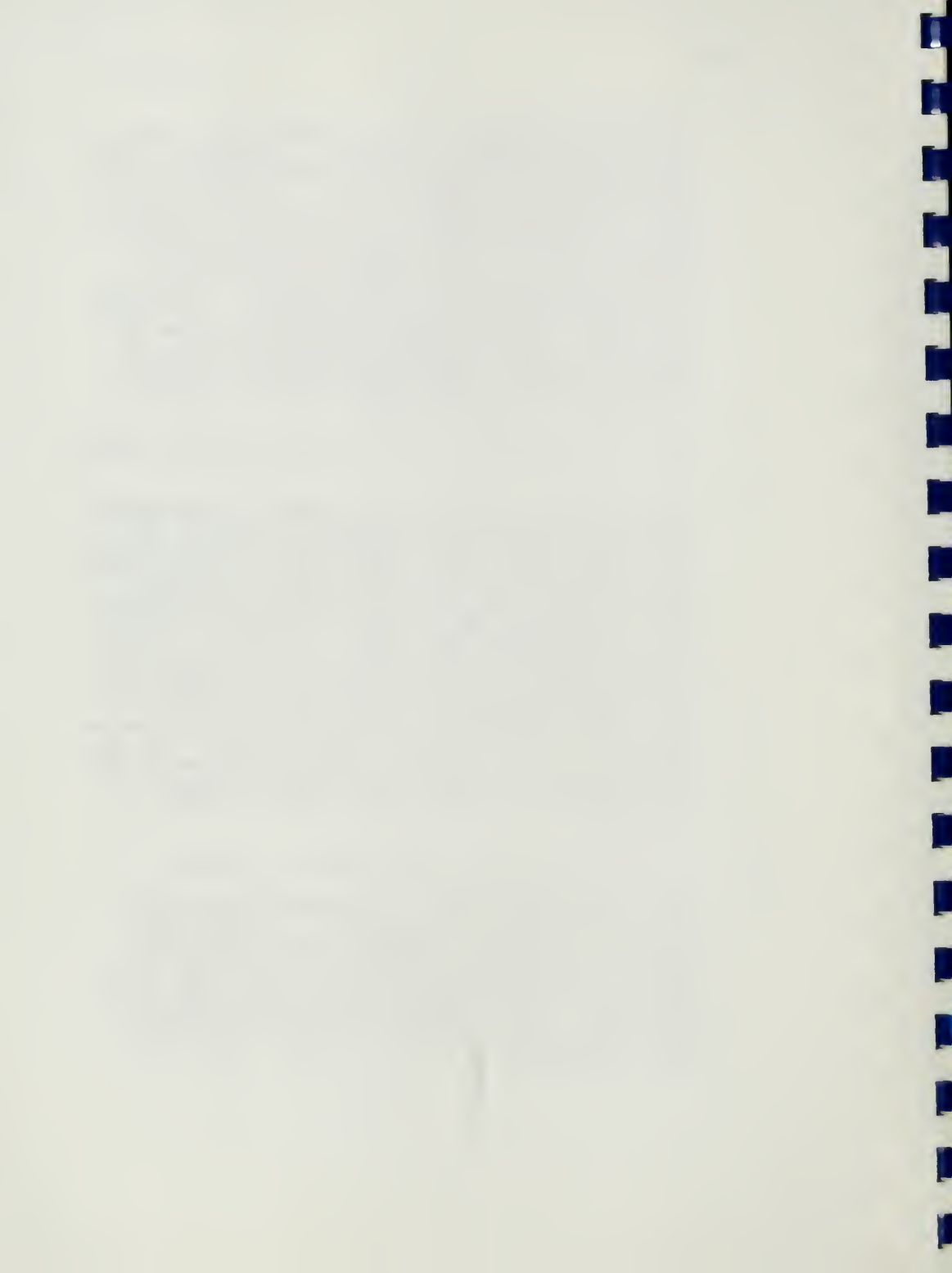
AN: introduced myself as "Mrs." Beverly, see, when I'd introduce myself to anybody. He told her that he had met me and all of that. And so she told him... And he said, "But she's married." She said, "You mean she has been married. But she isn't married now." He said, "What?" That's the way she told it. (Laugh) So that was the story. So then we had... at that time, see, had already got the flat on Steiner, as I told you. And my brother and I was living there together, and my daughter. He rode by and checked [out] the flat. He saw my brother go in the flat. And he went back and told her, "I thought you told me she wasn't married. I saw a man go in there." She said, "That's her brother." (Laughter) So that was that.

JW: He was really checking you out before he got to know you.

AN: That's right. So then we had a Booker T. Washington Community Center there on Divisadero, and we were about to lose it. I was active in clubs and things over here as well, see. They wanted to put on a program...Lora Toombs Scott--she lives in Oakland--and she played and, you know, would help to promote those things. So she was going to promote a show. And so she promoted this show. We were to...I had met him [by] then, and we went to a couple of shows. We went to see...at that time it was Mae Murray at the theater and she did the "Merry Widow Waltz." And he was a good dancer. And, of course, I'd rather dance than eat at that time. And so that's how that happened. So we, we did the "Merry Widow Waltz" for that benefit. We raised quite a bit of money... enough to save the place, the Community Center, at that time.

JW: What did your friends think about Mr. Savelle?

AN: Well, he had been a...See, I was Number Three [the third wife] in his life. (Chuckle) And so when I met him...I went to a luncheon...she [Number Two] was at this luncheon, and so she made a point to meet me. She was still wearing his name, see. And so she said, "I heard that Cass was taking you out" and all like that. She said, "But don't take him seriously." Just like that. I said, "Okay, thank you." (Chuckle)



JW: That didn't bother you that he had been married before?

AN: No. Because I had too.

JW: How long after you met him did you get married?

AN: Let me see...When we started...I met him in March. Then we started to rehearsing, you know, for this program and things and put that on. Then we went to Santa Barbara. It was in July...July 3rd. It was right after they had had that first severe earthquake in Santa Barbara. We were married there. And I wanted it to...I wanted him to wait and we'd announce it publicly in December, see. But he got hot-headed and told somebody. And I denied it. To the point that I went to the church, to my pastor here and remarried again. (Chuckle)

JW: Did Johnnie like him?

AN: Yes. Very fond of him. He adopted her. Yes. He had a car, which was, you know, an incentive too at that time. She loved the automobile...to ride in the car and everything. And he was nice.

JW: During this time, did you ever get homesick?

AN: No. You mean for Louisiana?

JW: Yes.

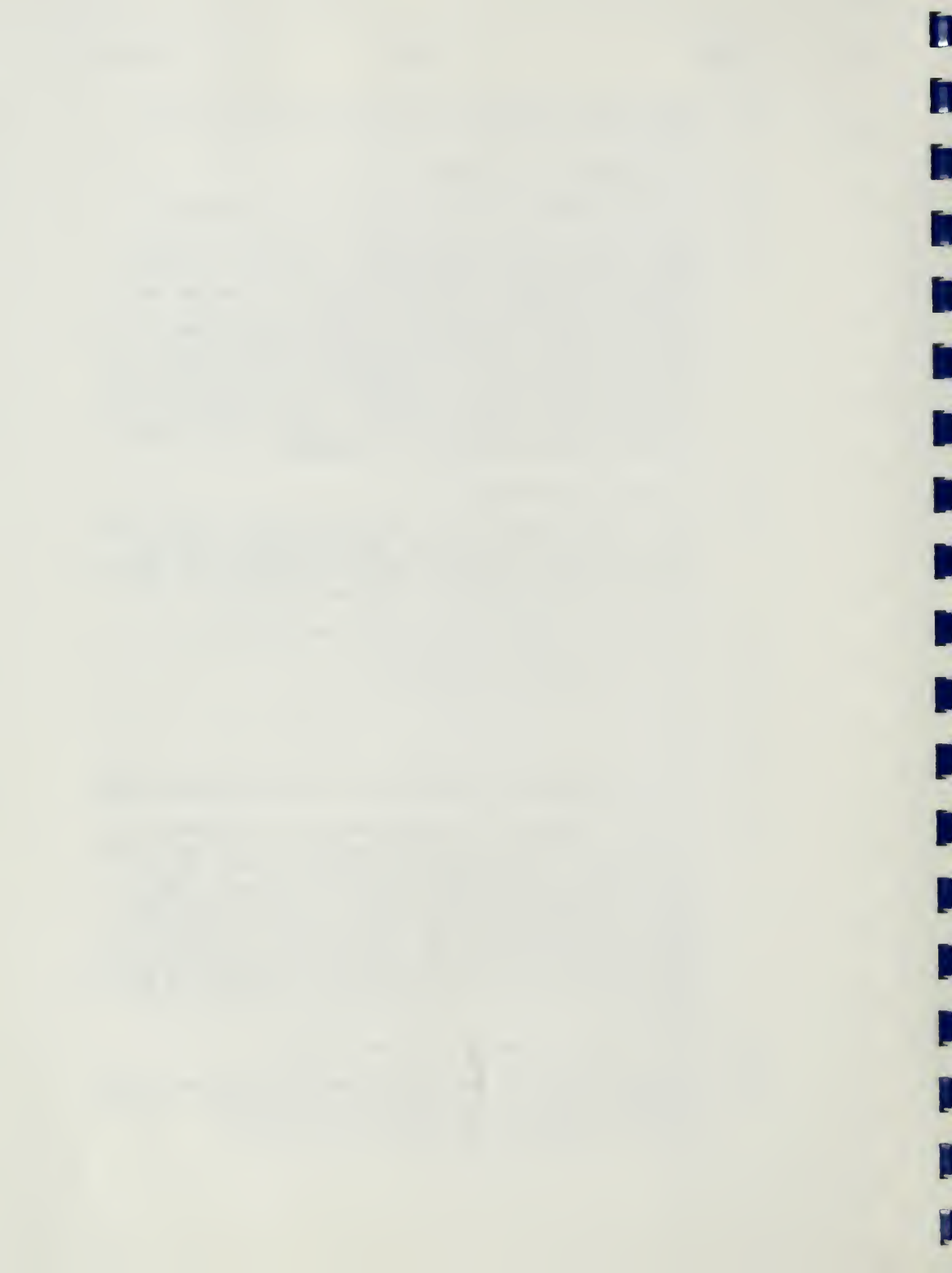
AN: No.

JW: Did you maintain contacts with your relatives **there**?

AN: Oh, yes. Most of my relatives, see, had passed. I had only one aunt...See, my mother and father moved to Chicago. My parents both lived there, and my parents both are buried there in Chicago. And my aunt, she had moved to Houston. So that was the closest relatives I had. So seemingly I had nobody there [in Louisiana] for contact then...Just a few friends, and, you know, they scattered like I did...those that was my age, scattered around to different places.

JW: Why did your parents move to Chicago?

AN: Because his work...he went to work for...What's that company's name? On agriculture and stuff? What's that big company in Chicago, in Illinois?



JW: Oh, McCormick?

AN: Yes. Not McCormick. Oh, what's the name of that? Harvest....International Harvester. He worked for them until he passed.

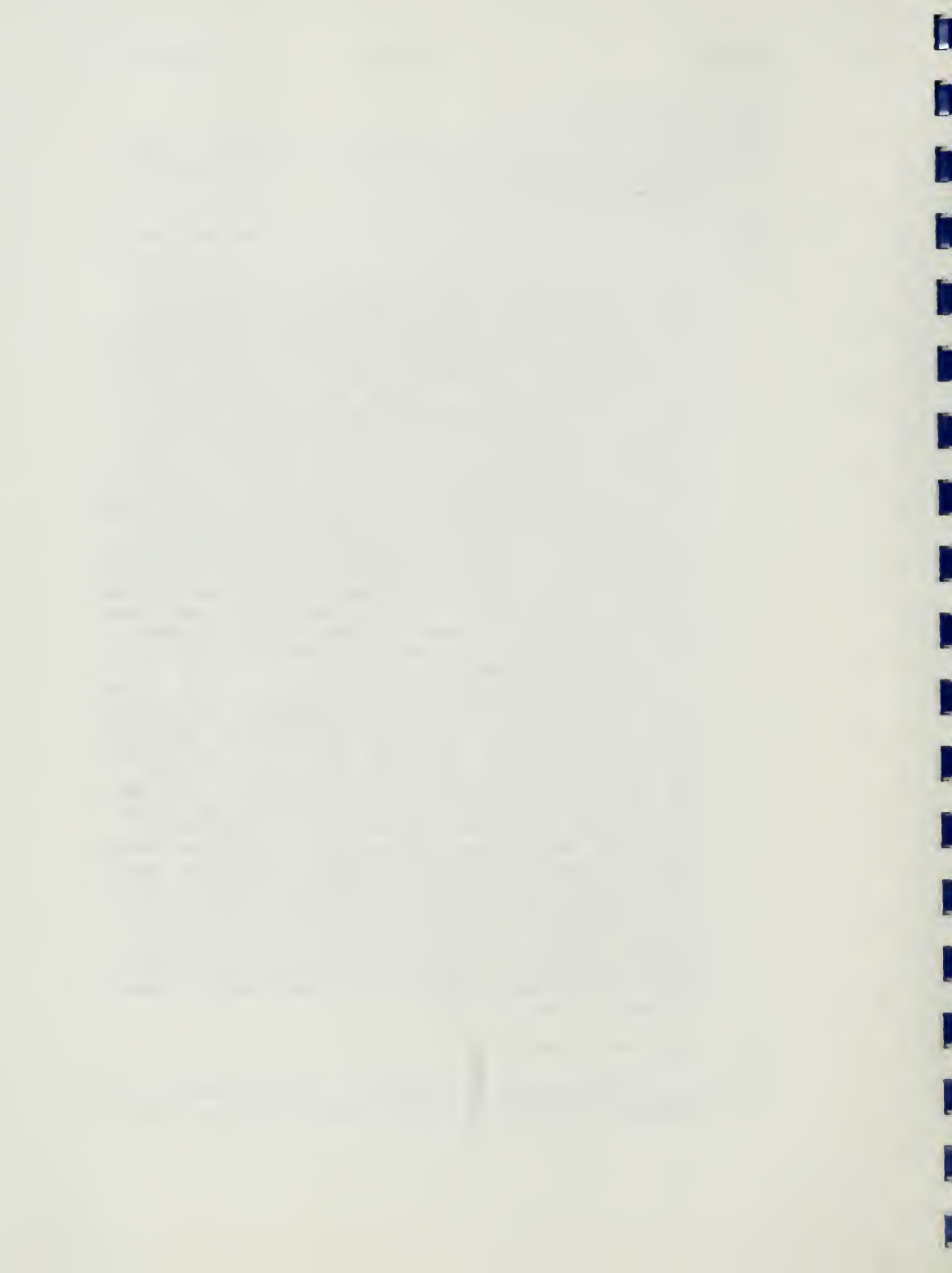
JW: Eventually you bought a house out on Margaret Avenue.

AN: We built it...had it built. See Mr. Savelle was a World War I veteran. And that was the way we got that. At that time they allowed five thousand dollars for a home, or seven thousand five hundred for a farm. And if you were going to build, it had to stay within that amount. Or if you wanted more, you had to add to it. It had to be cash, because there couldn't be no liens against the property of any kind. We built it just on the verge of the Depression coming in to us. He at that time was a chauffeur for J. G. Johnson...that was the big butcher people who owned Butchertown here in San Francisco. That was another blessing. We never had to buy meat or anything; all our meat was free and everything like that, see. And so we looked at the plans, had plans drawn up...the man drew the plans up. He was a Swedish contractor. And they saw what was coming. You see, people who could get some money, they were trying to get into Fresno and the Valley or some-- get a piece of land or something so they could survive when this Depression came.

So we had the the five thousand from the Government, and the two thousand five hundred, and that's what we paid when we had the house built. And, you know, paid him off. And when, as a rule, sometimes I guess--some people say it's fate--I don't know what it is. But we moved into the house...And the cute thing about it--I want that in it: My nephew, my brother's son, was born on the day they broke ground for that house. (Chuckle) Shortly we moved into the house from Steiner Street, he had to have just a little operation, Mr. Savelle. So he couldn't do chauffeur work anymore because he couldn't sit... doing that work. And the people, J. G. Johnson butcher people, they saw what was coming, and they started to unload...move...see, that's when they moved Butchertown to where it is now down in...what's the name of that place?

JW: South San Francisco?

AN: No. No, they moved it farther. It's way down. It's about one hundred and fifty miles, more than that,



AN: from here now. It's down in the Valley or some place, they moved it. So they sold because they saw what was coming. Then, as I said, he wasn't able to do chauffeur work anymore. And the old man passed. Of course, he worked for the old lady up until, as long, until he was able to do that. But when he done that...So he was an excellent cook and also a wonderful waiter. So he felt that there was an opportunity in ~~[unintelligible]~~ for us. See, I had opened a beauty salon there. The first shop, I had already opened it, see, and had started that work, before we moved out there.

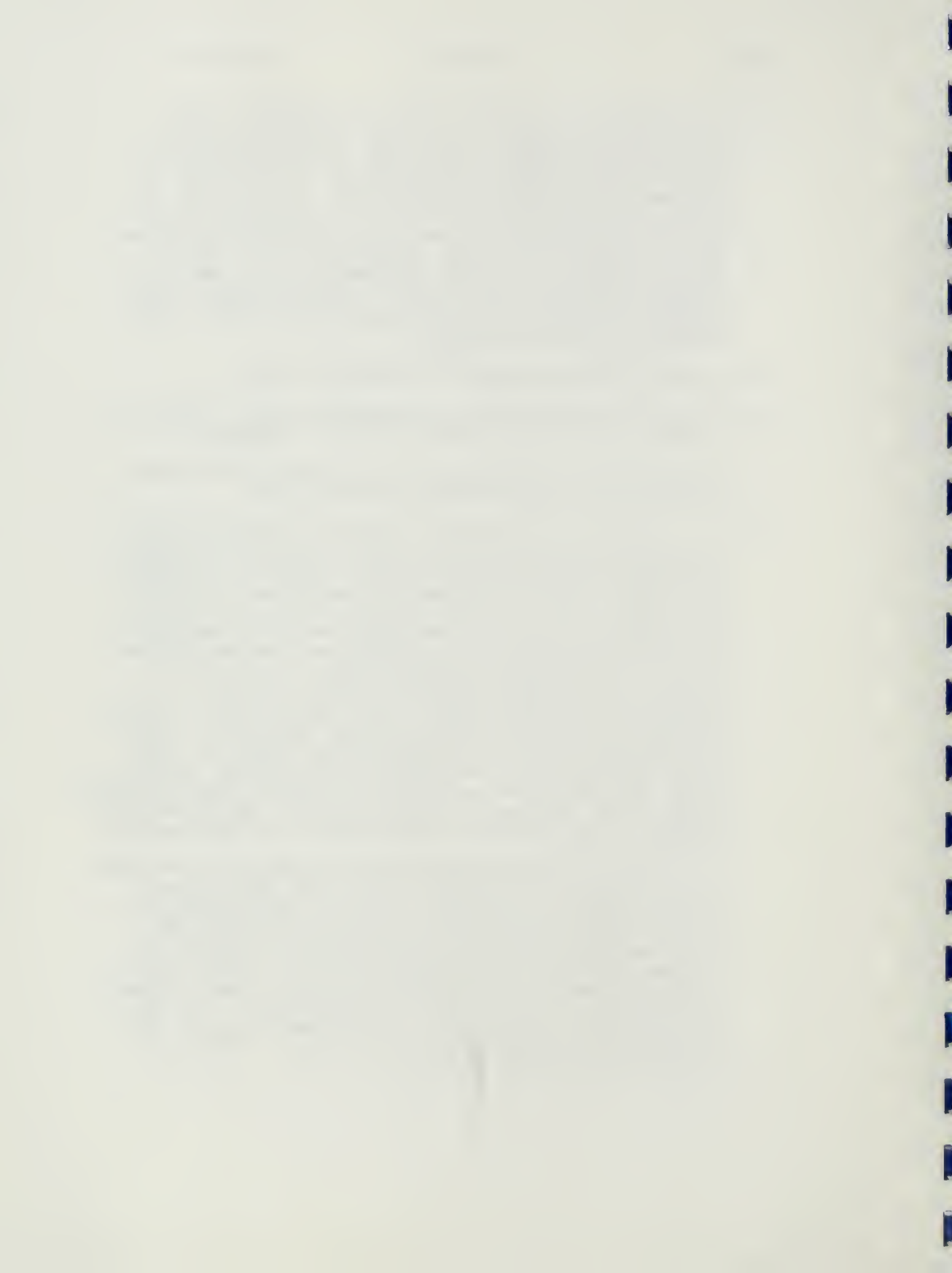
JW: Wasn't that considered a little far out?

AN: Very. You know what his theme song was? "I'm going to Move to the Outskirts of Town." (Laughter)

JW: Did you feel in any way that this might be a disadvantage for Johnnie living that far out?

AN: No. You see, we had such beautiful transportation... streetcar transportation in San Francisco. At one time almost on every other street there was streetcar lines. You could see them sometimes; some they have taken up. But they was all over, and it was only five cents, see. And they ran until midnight. Some ran all night long. There were certain streetcars you could ride all night long...get on all night. So transportation was just wonderful. So when she got on the...she'd get on the bus...on the streetcar...it wasn't bus, it was streetcars...and when she'd get on the streetcar out there at Lakeview and San Jose. And then she'd transfer at Van Ness, and that took her right to Galileo [High School]. Because she had gone to Galileo before we moved out there, so she wanted to go on there. So she went on there.

The day she graduated from Galileo, she was the only Colored in the class. And they went...sent them in pairs. They sent her with the richest boy in the class. (Chuckle) And one of my friends... they had the Prom at the Mark Hopkins, and so, of course, she went with a Colored boy to that. And so my friend had a full-length mink coat. She had her to wear that to this White...to the Prom. And they said she was from India. The newsmen come in there and wanted to know where she was from. (Chuckle) It was a lot of fun.



JW: In your beauty salon, just jumping back on that one more time, did you ever discriminate among customers? Were there people you didn't want to serve?

AN: No. Never.

JW: I mean, I assume you got an occasional...some of the ladies of the evening?

AN: Oh, I had plenty of those. Those are your best customers, because, see, they would come two and three times a week. (Chuckle) And they were ladies. You never knew what they were doing or anything, see, because we didn't...let them talk about...I didn't let them talk about things like that. And then in separate booths...everybody was in a separate booth. But...and they were nice. They were good tippers as well. So the girls welcomed them...to do them. It was quick. You rolled them up and put them under the dryer and you...or you dry it and then curl it. See, for a long time, you used to curl their hair with warm irons just like you did the Colored.

JW: Did you have any problems with their pimps coming around or anything?

AN: Oh, no. They never came. No. I didn't permit nothing like that. No, they never came. They came by themselves...come to the shop.

JW: Did they live better than most Black women?

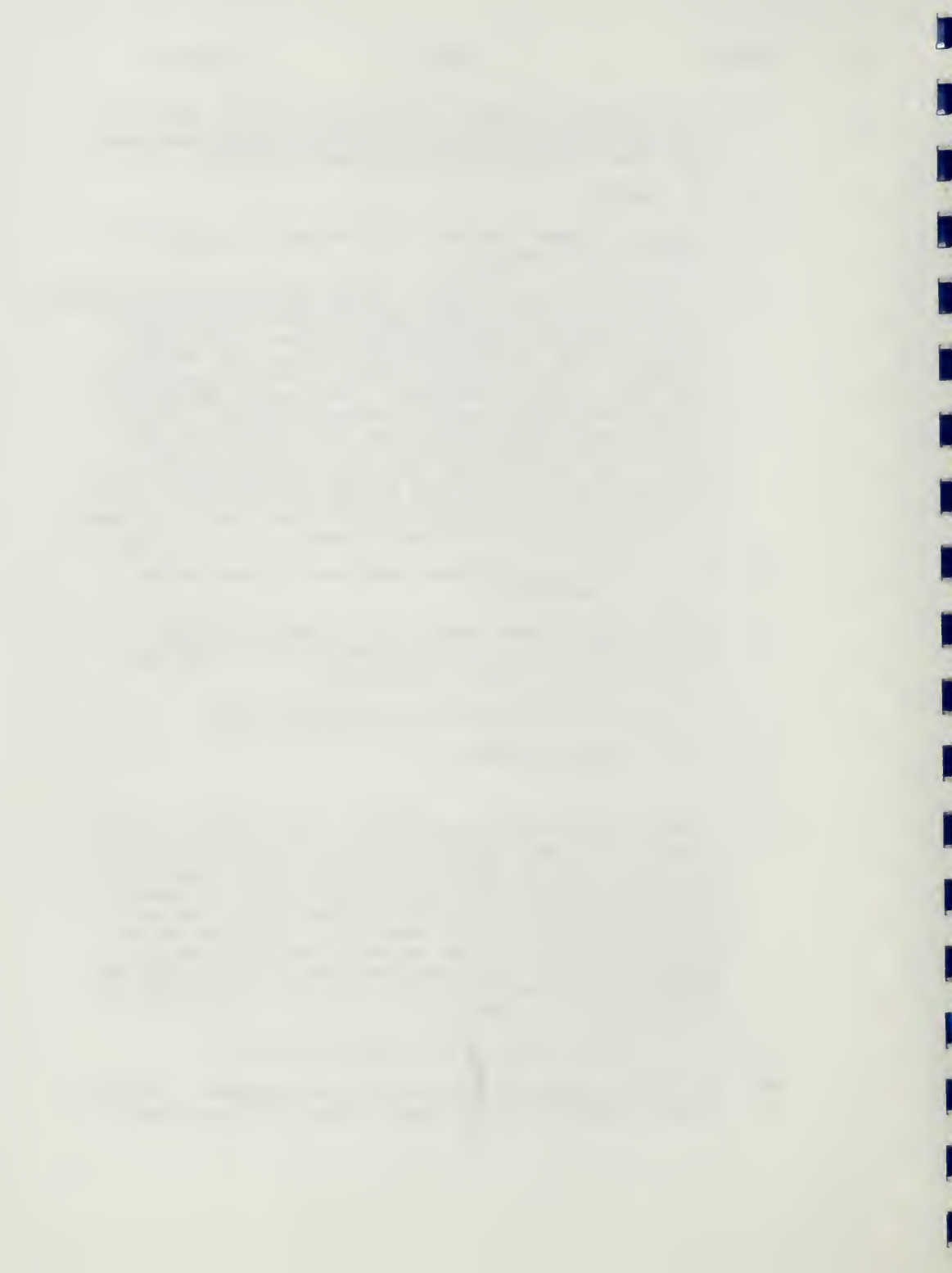
AN: What? Those are White.

JW: Oh.

AN: I never had Colored prostitutes. They were all White, because, you see, they had a place in that vicinity not too far in the Fillmore District, see, and I had all their trade. Those were the Whites. It wasn't...the Colored prostitutes, those that was...they were more like hustlers. You know, they would do 'street work', we'd say, and one or two...But when they'd come in the shop, they were perfect ladies. Whatever their business was was not our trouble, you know. We had nothing to do about it.

JW: Did you have contact with theater people?

AN: Oh, yes. I had my cards at all the theaters. And when "Green Pastures" played here, I had all those people



AN: from there. And they supported the shop so beautifully; I gave a party for them out at my home before they left...before the cast left.

JW: Did you enjoy the theater?

AN: Yes, I do.

JW: Did you ever consider going into the theater?

AN: No.

JW: Why not?

AN: I don't know. It just didn't appeal to me that way.

JW: Do you remember meeting any famous people?

AN: Met [Richard B.] Harrison who was the head of the cast. And Nora, his wife...I met all the people. And one...what's this pianist's name that's still living in New York? An old man now.

JW: Eubie Blake?

AN: Yes. Eubie Blake has been in my home. I have Eubie Blake's signature with something on it. They all were there....END TAPE



